

**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on September 12, 2019, at the Lake Itasca Room, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW.

Commission Members Present: Chair Shane Bennett
 Vice Chair Brandon Sis
 Commissioner Trixy Barnes
 Commissioner Nathan Barten
 Commissioner Russell Bayer
 Commissioner Jennifer Leistico
 Commissioner Jennifer Shoemaker

Commission Members Absent: None

Also Present: Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bennett called the Park and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Bayer, seconded by Commissioner Barnes, to approve the Park and Recreation Commission meeting agenda as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Bayer, Barnes, Barten, Leistico, Shoemaker, Sis. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Bayer, seconded by Commissioner Sis, to approve the August 8, 2019, Park and Rec Commission meeting minutes as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Bayer, Sis, Barnes, Barten, Leistico, Shoemaker. Voting No: None. Absent: No.

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.01: Consider Rivers' Bend Park and Monument Replacement

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided an overview of the history of Rivers' Bend Park, notating the timing of the monument, fields, playground, and other features original installations. He discussed what a replacement shelter may look like, which may include a fire pit and pizza ovens. He briefly described the possible funding mechanisms, including the Capital Maintenance Fund for repairs, as well as the Capital Improvement Program for new improvements.

Chair Bennett asked about the reservation system for the shelter.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted there is an online reservation system that is user-friendly. He noted that online reservations are limited to the next four to six months so the system does not become overpopulated. The shelter at Rivers' Bend is not as highly used as others in the park system.

Commissioner Shoemaker asked about the rental fee for Elmcrest Park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded it all depends on what is reserved, e.g., the pavilion, the meeting space; all of that information is online. He noted that he is not proposing anything on the scale of Elmcrest for Rivers' Bend. To replicate that building today would be approximately \$1 million, and it would need a lift station as well. Something along the lines of a simple hexagonal shelter with a concrete floor may be more appropriate for Rivers' Bend.

Commissioner Barnes inquired about lighting at the new shelter.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated it is possible. He stated one option is to add a restroom to the park area, with a vault system.

Chair Bennett asked about the funding of the project.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood explained the Capital Maintenance Fund in contrast to the CIP. The Capital Maintenance Fund is available for things like roof replacements. In such a simple, straight-forward situation, a proposal can be brought forward, the Park and Rec Commission can approve it, and it can proceed to the consent agenda for the City Council. When it comes to new improvements or upgrading to a new and more modern shelter, or adding a restroom, however, those projects cross the line into Capital Improvement. In such cases, those items would then need to be entered into the CIP. He noted that the Park and Rec Commission will be discussing the CIP in October or November. CIP items would not be done right away, but rather would require a planning process and would include public input.

Commissioner Leistico noted the signage is difficult to see at Rivers' Bend, and she also asked about high water issues during times of flooding.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded that flooding used to occur only a few days during spring flood events, but now it happens more regularly. The park is not closed to people, but it is closed to vehicular traffic. It could potentially cause access issues to Rivers' Bend shelter. He noted the water issues are used to be concentrated through the spring but do occasionally happen throughout the year.

Commissioner Leistico asked about the usage of the park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded Rivers' Bend is used more than any other park during the day. A lot of that has to do with density of residents around it. Additionally, it is very convenient to a lot of high school students traveling to and from school. It is also near a business area, so that many folks use it as a lunch spot. In the evening, there can be athletic activity, and seniors are there appreciating the tennis courts during the week. If there is a tournament at Central or Elmcrest, the numbers will exceed that. But the daily individual patrons at Rivers' Bend is generally the highest in the park system.

Commissioner Sis asked about expanding the canoe and kayak rental program along the river for more frequent recreation on the river.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood indicated that could be a possibility. However, there are two factors in play: the boat landing at the fair grounds is open and only 5 or 6 thousand feet away, with adequate parking so that is a good spot for those activities. Also, the high flow in the river during flood conditions could potentially create an issue for folks in canoes or kayaks. Lake Itasca may potentially be the better spot.

Chair Bennett stated the easiest points to begin on this project may be with signage, since current signage is so difficult to see. He asked if signage would be considered a new project or a renovation.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded that signage falls within the Capital Maintenance Fund. The monument replacement cost will be \$2,000-\$10,000. The question is whether Council is open to signage that might be unique to the park or whether the Council will want something that is wholly consistent with what is being done City-wide. Those preferences will determine the price tag.

Commissioner Barnes asked about the material of the sign.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood explained that signs are often far more expensive than one would expect, and anything beyond a more basic sign will easily be in the upper end of the stated range.

Chair Bennett asked about the north shelter near the playground.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded something needs to be done soon, or structural problems may begin to happen.

Chair Bennett asked about the BBQ pits on site.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded there is one grill, and there is one water fountain with misting station.

Chair Bennett suggested the roof clearly needs to be fixed, and further discussion needs to happen as to whether the shelter is salvageable. The south shelter, with some other amenities around it, may be a priority. It could be a draw for that second shelter.

Commissioner Shoemaker commented that many cities have a large gazebo at a City park which is suitable for weddings. She asked whether that is of interest on the south side of the park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded that events on the scale of weddings may be better suited for some of the downtown parks in planning right now. Rivers' Bend has limited parking in the south half. Sanitary services would definitely be needed as well. That sort of thing might be better programmed downtown, and it would be associated with a significant playground, a splash pad, and other new amenities. Rivers' Bend has a different feel to it, as it is more outdoorsy.

Chair Bennett stated there may be some potential for that at The Draw and possibly Elmcrest. With the extension of the greenway corridor and the splash pad, that opens up more formalized possibilities for events like weddings. That would be a great amenity to have.

Commissioner Shoemaker explained she is a wedding photographer, and a lot of people are opting for very small wedding in small locations. A lot of those park locations in other Cities limit the amount of people who can attend, to address limited parking and other concerns.

Chair Bennett responded positively to Commissioner Shoemaker's comments. If there were to be significant upgrades to the south shelter, that may become a possibility. The one shelter looks like it is falling down. But a shelter that is more aesthetically pleasing with a fireplace, that could be a beautiful backdrop for a small wedding ceremony.

Commissioner Barnes asked about the area flooding and how that may affect a new structure.

Chair Bennett stated he does not see anything beyond a concrete pad and a roof for the shelter, so that flooding would not negatively affect the integrity of the structure.

Commissioner Bayer asked about ADA compliance.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded that Rivers' Bend is ADA compliant now.

Chair Bennett pointed out the downtown waterfront sketches, noting the amenities like outdoor seating, manmade pond, restaurant concepts, indoor playground, splash pads, and open pavilion will create exciting opportunities.

Commissioner Shoemaker asked about moving the playground equipment to a smaller park like Ford Brook, and she also asked whether Ramsey has a future park plan.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded it may cost more to move something to Ford Brook than to simply replace it. He also recalled that the Ford Brook residents did not have a lot of interest a shelter. He also indicated that staff is in fact working on a larger park system plan. Staff is currently in the process of looking at individual parks.

Chair Bennett noted that Rivers' Bend is more of a destination park, and there is a need for shelters. Some smaller parks like Ford Brook have less of a need for shelters. He recalled the map created by staff that shows the parks in terms of park districts. That was an illustration of where the City should go in terms of park connectivity. The old City policy of opening "pocket parks" in every neighborhood has turned into a lot of maintenance dollars being spent for upkeep. He noted this was also during a time when there seemed to be a Rainbow play system in every backyard. That old parks strategy is now being modified now.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood thanked the Commission for its input.

6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood indicated several items to be on future agendas, including the upcoming CIP discussion; a review of the Recreation Policy Plan; a concert wrap-up presentation; and the introduction of the Recreation Specialist, Abby Proulx.

Chair Bennett thanked Commissioner Barnes for all the time she spent at the booth at Happy Days. He also thanked Commissioner Barton for stopping. The weather was not great, but the traffic was consistent.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Leistico, seconded by Commissioner Shoemaker, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Leistico, Shoemaker, Bayer, Barnes, Barten, Sis. Voting No: None. Absent: None.

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Riverblood
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Allison Burr
TimeSaver off Site Secretarial, Inc.