

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on January 14, 2021, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Commission Members Present: Chair Shane Bennett
 Vice Chair Brandon Sis
 Commissioner Nathan Barten
 Commissioner Jennifer Leistico
 Commissioner Justin Loss

Commission Members Absent: Commissioner Matthew Guck

Also Present: Deputy City Administrator Tim Gladhill
 Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
 Recreation Specialist Abby Proulx
 Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bennett called the Park and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

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

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Sis, Barten, Leistico, and Loss.
Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Guck.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Leistico, seconded by Commissioner Loss, to approve the following Park and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting Minutes:

1. Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes dated November 12, 2020.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Leistico, Loss, Barten, and Sis. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Guck.

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.01: 2020 Summer Event Series Recap

Recreation Specialist Proulx presented a recap of the 2020 summer event series, noting that the first few events were canceled. She reviewed some of the new COVID-19 safety protocols which were implemented and highlighted the different performers. She stated that staff anticipates having similar protocols for 2021 events. She stated that Roadhouse Blue Band will be kicking off the 2021 season and highlighted some of the performers that have been invited back for 2021.

Chair Bennett thanked staff for that recap and the sneak peek into 2021. He recognized and thanked staff for implementing protocols that allowed the City to offer the series in 2020.

5.02: Consider Park Dedication Recommendations Related to Riverstone South; Case of Capstone Homes/Riverstone Development

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that the group reviewed this on a high-level basis almost one year ago and the preliminary plat is now moving forward. He stated that this proposal is a 230-lot subdivision with detached single homes, although some of the homes will be smaller lot residential. He stated that this project will mostly mirror the original Riverstone north development, which has been very popular. He commented that the single-family housing market continued to be strong despite the uncertainty of the pandemic. He highlighted the development request specific to Park Dedication, noting that the one-acre park proposed along with a cash contribution of \$350,000 would satisfy the Park Dedication requirement for the development. He stated that the standard trail development fee of \$1,000 per unit would also apply to the project. He continued that as part of the land use planning the City and Developer were able to negotiate a creative design that would allow for some smaller lots in return for the City acquiring long-term permanent preservation of seven acres of the wooded area. He stated that the City is seeking financial assistance from an outside group in order to make the preservation of that seven acres possible. He stated that the preserved wooded area along with greenspace and stormwater management areas will create a great buffer area and density transitioning. He stated that the focus of the discussion should be on the one-acre park and cash contribution.

Commissioner Barten asked for additional information on the connection to the existing Bowers Drive, specifically whether it would be paved.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that there has been quite a bit of discussion about connectivity to Bowers Drive, which is the longest cul-de-sac in the community. He stated that the neighborhood was created prior to the cul-de-sac length limitations. He stated that the initial recommendation of staff was to provide a connection between the neighborhoods, however the Council direction was not to include that connection based on the input received from the Bowers Drive residents. He stated that the Bowers Drive residents were strongly opposed to the

connection. He stated that the corridor will still exist, and a hydrant will be added to provide additional safety to the Bowers Drive neighborhood.

Chair Bennett asked if the tree preservation area would be left as wild space or whether there would be a trail through that area.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that at minimum it will be left in its natural state.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that there are no planned trails, but it would be expected that residents could enjoy that area and therefore staff is recommending an additional narrow access along what is shown as Street A to provide access. He stated that if that access is not provided there would still be access through the public area, which would be adequate. He stated that the staff recommendation is consistent with the recommendations generally offered by the Commission during the sketch plan review process in 2020. He stated that the Commission had requested adequate trail connections to the east, which is shown on the preliminary plat. He commented that he believes Capstone is also supportive of the recommended action.

Chair Bennett agreed that during the original discussions, tree preservation, Park Dedication and trail connections were the main requests of the Commission and noted that those appear to be addressed on the proposed plan.

Commissioner Loss asked if this park included preservation of a barn.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that the barn preservation was actually part of a different development request. He noted that as this park development moves forward staff would recommend taking advantage of the trees and perhaps use a tree fort theme for the playground within Riverstone South. He provided some example concepts that take advantage of treed areas.

Commissioner Barten stated that in the earlier sketches it appeared that the park area and tree preservation area was larger than shown on this plan.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the first plan showed the one-acre park in a different area and since that time the one-acre park was moved to the proposed location which does include mature trees. He noted that this preserved tree area and park go well beyond the requirements of the City. He stated that Park Dedication is limited to the one-acre park land and the \$350,000.

Commissioner Leistico commented that she was glad that the developer was able to move the park location to the site which include mature trees.

Tom Bakritges, Capstone Homes, commented that this has been a collaborative process between the developer and City staff to provide a quality development. He stated that when they completed the tree survey the previous summer, the location for the one-acre park actually contains the highest quality oak trees. He stated that tree preservation was important to staff and the Pearson family, along with the residents in the adjacent Bowers Drive neighborhood. He stated that with that

preservation area, green space, and stormwater retention ponds there will be over 15 acres of area that will provide a buffer between the neighborhoods. He stated that they would prefer to have a connection to the woods as proposed in the greenspace area but noted that they would work with staff to determine if another easement could be provided off Street A. He stated that they will also continue to work with staff related to the trail requirements and trail widths. He noted that they believe that an eight-foot concrete trail connection would be adequate to the Nathe property but could provide a ten-foot bituminous trail if desired. He hoped that they could begin construction on this neighborhood in the spring of 2022 once the Riverstone North development is completely sold out.

Chair Bennett thanked Mr. Bakritges for the collaboration with City staff and the Commissions and Council over the past year.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the recommendation in the case is consistent with the staff, developer, and previous Commission discussion. He stated that in regard to the trail width, the City equipment is up to nine feet wide and therefore it would be impossible to clear an eight-foot trail without damage to sod occurring. He stated therefore a ten-foot width would be required for trails.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer commented that snowplowing is a large task for public works and a ten-foot width is needed for trails in order to avoid damaging the sod. He noted that the wider trails also allow sufficient space for pedestrians to pass one another.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that whether concrete or bituminous is used would be the choice of the developer.

Motion by Commissioner Barten, seconded by Commissioner Leistico, to recommend that the City Council accept the proposal to satisfy Park Dedication through dedication of one acre of land along with \$350,000 cash contribution; together with a pedestrian access point to the Tree Preservation area, and the payment of Trail Fees of \$1,000 per residential lot platted in 2021.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Barten, Leistico, Loss and Sis. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Guck.

5.03: Consider Land Purchase to Expand Loral I Armstrong Central Park

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the community park system discussion has included a notion to expand Central Park for more than the past decade. He stated that until now an agreement could not be made on a purchase for additional land. He noted that most recently the adjacent property owner has developed a price concept for the land and presented that to the City. He identified the general 11-acre parcel that could be considered with a proposed value of about \$517,000 plus closing costs. He asked for input from the Commission on the potential purchase or whether those funds would be better used in creating new athletic fields in another park area. He stated that another option would be to work with the adjacent property owner on a ghost plat to achieve the highest and best land use, to include park space with a potential future subdivision, noting that if the adjacent property were subdivided, land could be required to satisfy Park Dedication for that subdivision.

Chair Bennett noted that additional land has been discussed for Central Park in past discussions, the main issues centered more on traffic management and parking for events. He stated that ARAA provided comments to staff and believed that additional work and discussion could occur with that group. He stated that the sense from ARAA is that right now additional field space is not needed. He stated that if additional fields were to be added, ARAA would look more towards artificial turf fields which would provide flexibility due to different weather conditions. He noted that ARAA is most interested in additional indoor space, whether that be through a community center or mixed-use space. He commented indoor space would be the number one want from ARAA at this point, therefore a commitment of \$500,000 for this park space could take away from those other wants and needs in the community. He stated that he does like the idea of ghost platting as that would still provide a potential opportunity to add another field or two along with traffic and parking improvements which could then be done through Park Dedication.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that in this instance the adjacent property would develop in R-1, which would be 80-foot-wide lots on City water, and therefore irrigation could be provided to any additional field space that may be added. He noted that the current well at the field does not have capacity for any more irrigation. He stated that ARAA has made the request that the City look at synthetic turf for additional fields. He noted that while there is additional cost to create that type of field, there are significantly lower maintenance needs, and impacts from weather.

Chair Bennett asked if this would be a good value for the City and the overall community and whether it is needed now.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed details on land sales that occurred outside The COR in 2019 and 2020 and equated that to a per square foot cost for comparison purposes.

Commissioner Sis stated that he would also support the ghost plat idea. He stated that there is not a firm plan for the exact layout of the adjacent property. He believed that would be a good conversation to have in order to assess needs over time.

Commissioner Leistico asked when the appraisal was completed that was included in the case.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that he believed that was completed in 2016 or 2017 and had a valuation of \$118,000. He stated that the adjacent property owner rejected that proposal at that time and did not believe that was the correct valuation.

Commissioner Leistico stated that there is quite a difference between that valuation and this proposal. She stated that this seems like a large amount of money when there are other huge endeavors in other areas of the park system. She stated that this is an opportunity but does not seem to fit in with the vision for the other parks. She stated that there would also be an added expense for irrigation as described by staff. She recognized that adding to Central Park has been a discussion, but this cost was not part of that discussion.

Chair Bennett agreed that the number seems high and there are other priorities in the community that the Commission has discussed. He stated that while ARAA would welcome more fields, that is not the top priority of that organization at this time. He stated that those should be factored into this decision. He stated that the fix for Central Park was not necessarily to make it bigger but address the flow, traffic management and parking for the site. He did not believe that this purchase would achieve the long-term vision for the park.

Commissioner Leistico agreed.

Commissioner Loss agreed that the ghost plat option and continuing that discussion with the adjacent property owner would be the best choice. He stated that there are higher priorities that could utilize those funds.

Chair Bennett stated that there seems to be a consensus to not recommend pursuit of this purchase.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that there seems to be universal consensus to pursue this manner with planning with the adjacent property owner rather than only pursuing a purchase. He stated that if the land is sold in the future one could say that opportunity would be lost but the City would still have the opportunity to require park dedication along with a future plat. He stated that the offer for the City to purchase the 11 acres may have been a courtesy to the City. He confirmed that staff could continue discussions with the property owner as related to the ghost plat option.

Chair Bennett commented that this would not mean that the City could not go back if the circumstances change but the Commission has reached consensus that this is not the right time or need, and would prefer to take the course of working with a future landowner/developer on the needs for Central Park at that time.

Commissioner Sis asked if artificial turf would be for indoors or also for outdoor use.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that the desire is for outdoor turf. He noted that staff can continue to explore the potential cost for that improvement.

Chair Bennett noted that there is opportunity to continue discussions with ARAA on the real needs for that organization. He appreciated the approach and priorities shared by that organization.

6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the ice skating got off to a slow start because of the weather. He stated that the rinks are open and warming houses are open at 25 percent capacity. He stated that a pleasure rink was created to the northwest of City Hall as well.

Recreation Specialist Proulx advised that the virtual art programming that was previously offered was a great success and highlighted upcoming virtual art programs. She stated that they have also partnered with Anoka County Recreation to offer snowshoeing in the parks on February 6th and March 16th. She stated that another opportunity is being offered on March 20th which will be a

birding hike. She stated that staff is working to offer a few more programming opportunities related to monarchs and provided details. She stated that more fitness opportunities will be offered once indoor facilities can be opened again.

Chair Bennett thanked staff for the update. He noted that the Commission does have a vacant position and encouraged interested residents to apply for the position.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Sis, seconded by Commissioner Barten, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Sis, Barten, Leistico, and Loss.
Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioner Guck.

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Riverblood
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.