

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on June 10, 2021, at Rabbit Park, 17440 Rabbit Street NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

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

Commission Members Absent: None

Also Present: City Council Liaison Ryan Heineman
 Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
 Parks and Recreation Intern Brandon Wagenfeld

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 Leistico, to approve the Park and Recreation Commission meeting agenda as presented.

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

No action needed.

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.01: Recommend Park Dedication for Williams Woods (Project No. 20-138)

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that this is a small plat of nine lots, but over a large area of land. He stated that a variance is requested for the long cul-de-sac length because there is not opportunity to connect to another road because of the wetlands. He provided details on the subject property, noting that this area had been included in a general search area for a community park, but a low-density development of this area would not be a good fit for a community park. He stated that staff recommends that Park Dedication and Trail fees be satisfied in cash for this subdivision.

Chair Bennett agreed with the staff recommendation that it would not seem to make sense to place a neighborhood park in this location and the property is outside of the core loop for trails.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the recommended motion language in that the cash amount be satisfied at the time of final plat, as the process sometimes lags, and the park dedication and trail fees may differ at the time final plat eventually moves forward.

Motion by Commissioner Sis, seconded by Commissioner Barten, to recommend to City Council, that Park Dedication and Trail Fees by satisfied in an amount calculated at the time of Final Platting for Williams Woods.

Further discussion: Commissioner Walker stated that he is also a member of the Planning Commission. He noted that there were lengthy discussions related to the cul-de-sac length and advised that the road width may increase in order to satisfy the concerns of Public Safety. He asked for clarification on the park dedication requirement. Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood explained that State statutes provide for certain development fees when additional demand is placed on the community systems. He used the example of a 200-lot apartment building and the impact that would have on City amenities, such as parks and facilities. He explained that the existing residents should not be burdened with that additional demand and therefore park dedication is charged to support the additional demand that would be placed on the system. He stated that the maintenance of parks and trails is understood to be a part of the operating costs of the City. He noted that similarly the City has other development fees such as stormwater, street lighting, etc. Commissioner Walker referenced the number of parks in Ramsey noting that there is one park for every 1,000 residents. He likened it to extortion or blackmail, even though there is State statute, as he was unsure why more parks are needed rather than maintaining the existing infrastructure. Commissioner Sis stated that is part of the discussion for the next agenda item. Chair Bennett stated that the policy of the City for the past ten years has been to avoid pocket parks, as developers have previously followed the trend to install a pocket park in their developments. He stated that the Commission has shifted away from that model to a model with more regional parks that serve a broader purpose for the community. He stated that for larger developments with 200 homes, it would still make sense to include a park within the development. Commissioner Walker commented that he understands that intent but in the case of this development these will be estate type homes that most likely will not be occupied by families and therefore park dedication seems unfair. Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that there needs to be equity in the application of City fees rather than placing

different commitments to the community on different homes. He stated that the people that purchase these homes will most likely have children that play sports and use the regional parks. He stated that the park system provides something for everyone to enjoy, whether it be sports, playground use, or use for different celebrations. Chair Bennett commented that this is a consistent practice across communities and noted that Ramsey surveys other communities to ensure the development fees are similar.

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

5.02: Playground Replacement Policy

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that this has been on the radar of the Commission for some time, to develop a schedule for playground replacement and in a manner that allows for proper planning and budgeting. He stated that \$100,000 would most likely be the minimum amount to estimate for playground equipment. He noted that the focus should first be placed on developing the replacement plan and then can consider discussion of a funding source, noting that a good suggestion for funding could be the lawful gambling fund.

Parks and Recreation Intern Wagenfeld stated that while some communities have more informal policies, larger cities like Minneapolis have a more formal policy. He stated that he is considering seven different factors, four related to the playground itself while the other three factors relate more to context. He recognized the shift towards regional parks with more amenities rather than neighborhood parks as well as the factors of density and accessibility.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that the Ramsey policy would not be based on the policy of Minneapolis but instead the City is developing a scoring system that can be used to evaluate and schedule the replacements in an efficient and programmatic way.

Chair Bennett referenced the most recent update at Ford Brook and the discussions with the community members. He stated that he would like to see use studies and community engagement as a part of the process. He noted that sometimes the neighborhood parks are being used far more than originally believed.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that would become a part of the larger process. He noted that the scoring system would be developed along with the other elements such as use and community input. He referenced a policy used by Andover where input was solicited from the community and neighborhoods that did not provide input, did not rise to the top of the list for playground replacement.

Commissioner Barten agreed that the additional study would make sense, as sometimes you do not notice activity at the park when you drive by, but it can be heavily used at different times of the day. He stated that sometimes there is turnover in home ownership where the residents with children that have aged out of the park use have been replaced by families with younger children, similar to the Ford Brook area. He stated that he also supports more natural play areas.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that a GIS line of 1,500 feet could be drawn for a park. He stated that while the school district will not tell you whether a home has children, it will reply to the number and ages of children within that GIS area. He stated that data tends to provide valuable information on whether a playground replacement would be appropriate or whether there is not an age group demand in that area to support the investment.

Councilmember Heineman commented that he likes the idea of larger regional parks as it provides a broader benefit for the community and economy. He agreed that it would be important to review the usage of the parks as part of the consideration. He noted that some parks are desolate. He asked if there is an ability to sell a park that is not being used and use those funds to improve trails and other park infrastructure.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that had been considered in the past but there was a large amount of opposition from that neighborhood. He stated that if land is dedicated through park dedication, the land cannot be sold in that manner, it would revert to the original owner.

Councilmember Heineman commented that a feasibility study on the use of the park could support transitioning an active park into a more natural recreation area.

Commissioner Barten agreed that transition to a natural area could be viewed as more preferential for neighborhoods that have aged and no longer have a use for playground equipment.

Councilmember Heineman agreed and stated that if playground features are still desired, perhaps more natural features are incorporated that reduce maintenance needs.

Commissioner Walker stated that even if park dedicated land reverts back to the original owner, that land would be sold for development and would add to the tax roll.

Councilmember Heineman commented that he did not see that as a benefit to giving up park land.

Chair Bennett noted that there are creative solutions to be had but the policy will be needed in order to provide the initial evaluation.

Consensus of the Commission was to direct staff to continue to develop a potential framework and policy.

6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the Summer Concert Series is starting the following week. He noted that Art in the Park will restart again, and the Art Fair will be July 11th at Elmcrest Park. He stated that the new Recreation Specialist was recently hired and will be working on recreational programming opportunities.

Commissioner Loss referenced the expansion of the dog park at Alpine, noting that he is unsure if people are aware that new section is open for use. He commented that he believed a second entrance was also being adding that he has not noticed.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that he has received comments, so some people have been using the new portion. He stated that perhaps signage could be added. He stated that the two halves were meant to be separated in order to provide two areas for people to self-select for use. He stated that there are three new escape gates near the parking area, but a double gate was not installed on the east side.

Commissioner Loss stated that perhaps a welcome sign could be put on the gate between the areas to explain it is open for use. He referenced the swings at Elmcrest and noted that there are only baby swings available and asked if there would be an option to add regular swings.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that in 2014 the Commission looked at a number of different designs and selected that design. He stated that regular swings could be placed in the tot swings, but due to regulations they cannot be mixed. He doubted that there would be space to add a second swing area because of the spacing needed for that type of use.

Commissioner Loss stated that he has noticed that there are not dedicated areas for basketball outside of the school playgrounds. He stated that he noticed that the only basketball hoops available in City parks are within the parking area and dilapidated.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the parking area is only used during peak tournament times, otherwise the hoops are available for use. He stated that the courts available at PACT Charter School are open for public use. He advised of other basketball court locations in the city.

Commissioner Sis asked if the aeration of Sunfish Lake is still included on the CIP.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that is included on the CIP for this year and noted that he is attempting to schedule the work.

Commissioner Walker referenced he previously sent to staff related to the cost the City pays for application of chemical spraying.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that he can provide that information to Commissioner Walker. He estimated the cost to be between \$15,000 to \$20,000 for broad leaf spraying and fertilization.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Barten, Sis, Leistico, Loss, Olson, and Walker. 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 Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.