

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on January 13, 2022, 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  
   Commissioner Dean Olson  
   Commissioner Brian Walker

Commission Members Absent:

Also Present:                              City Council Liaison Ryan Heineman  
   Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood

**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 Walker to approve the Park and Recreation Commission meeting agenda as presented.

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

**4.      APPROVE MINUTES**

**4.01:   Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes**

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

- Park and Recreation Commission meeting minutes dated November 18, 2021

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

## **5. COMMISSION BUSINESS**

### **5.01: Trott Brook Crossing and Community Park Site – Preliminary Development Design and Costs**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the intent tonight is to continue discussion on the sixth community park that has been in the City's plans for about two decades or longer. He stated that on Tuesday, the City Council approved the Preliminary Plat for the proposed development. He noted that the recommendation of the Commission provided in October was presented to the Council and included in the Preliminary Plat approval. He stated that some of the preliminary costs for renovating the barn have been provided in the staff report. He stated that 23 acres are to be dedicated as part of park dedication, noting that 50 percent credit was provided for the upland area under the power line and no credit was provided for the buildings. He noted that this site had been identified for many years to serve the north part of Ramsey and the residents that do and will ultimately live around this area. He identified some potential uses of the barn buildings for the community. He believed that it could provide a new rental experience for Ramsey residents if developed for that purpose. He displayed the preliminary plat layout for the proposed development including the park space, trails, and connectivity to other developments. He stated that the earlier concept plans for the barn building area were reviewed further in terms of grading and topography. He reviewed details on the updated concept plans and potential uses for the buildings. He noted that the buildings would be available for use April through October in this scenario. He recognized the high cost for renovation of the buildings, noting that full scope may not be pursued to begin with. He noted that staff investigating similar barn event center uses and it was confirmed that this would not compete with the private sector and there would be demand for this type of use. He stated that staff also prepared modest revenue projections using the rates of similar barn type event centers. He also displayed examples of the different barn event centers that staff was able to find in the region.

Chair Bennett thanked Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood for the updated concept and cost estimates.

Commissioner Walker asked about the Aeromotor windmill shown at the pumphouse and asked if they are planning to use wind power for the structure.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that the Aeromotor windmill is the model with V-shaped blades that was historically used in rural areas to power the water well. He stated that it could be a working model noting that it is somewhat economical at a cost of about \$2,500.

Commissioner Walker appreciated the clarification that this would be used for the well.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that it could provide water supply for the garden but would not be practical to use for electrical power generation.

Commissioner Walker referenced the \$730,000 estimated cash value to the City shown. He stated that if the event center does not become feasible, it is his understanding that the City could not sell the buildings/property because it was provided through park dedication.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that the Council could accept the property with the homestead and buildings as fee/title so that it could be resold in the future but noted that would impact the land Park Dedication calculations.

Commissioner Walker stated that from his stance there is not a cash value unless it can be sold for cash. He referenced the projection that the farmhouse could be rented for \$2,400 per month. He believed that the City would be hard pressed to do so with the surrounding construction and renovation. He stated that if he could live on the property with the barns in the existing condition, he is unsure that he would pay that amount to live there. He stated that he does not support this development and believes the residents in that area are getting screwed.

Commissioner Olson asked for details on fire suppression and whether the buildings would be fully sprinkled.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that there is a line item to provide a dry fire suppression system. He estimated about \$30,000 or \$40,000 for fire suppression.

Chair Bennett acknowledged that Commissioner Walker does not support the development as a whole. He commented that there some things in the concept that are a best guess at this time which makes it difficult to provide a sound opinion. He appreciated the details and costs shown in the report and believed this was a fair projection. He believed that this would be a nice amenity as the development appears to be moving forward.

Commissioner Sis stated that he did not see the playground equipment or shelter costs included in the plan.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that those estimates were not included as of yet. He stated that he does have rough numbers and will work to bring them to better accuracy. He stated that his focus for this meeting was on the farmhouse and barn renovations, noting that he will bring additional details to the March meeting. He stated that he will look further into the rental estimates. He stated that in early phases the farmhouse would be rented while it would move to public day use in later phases. He believed that the park has considerable value to this area of the community, not only in this development but the surrounding residential areas and properties being developed in this area of Ramsey.

Councilmember Heineman commented that a lot of communities have upscale amenities of this nature that generate a lot of revenue. He stated that it will be nice to have the free park amenity for residents and also have a business proponent in the ability to rent the event center. He stated that the ability to have elective revenue is a great opportunity for the City. He believed that having a connection between the EDA and Parks and Recreation is also a benefit. He believed that this will be a great resource that will generate elective revenue and be an amenity to the community.

Chair Bennett acknowledged that this is something the parks system currently does not have and the ability to generate revenue would be an added benefit.

Commissioner Walker acknowledged that park of this nature would add value to the community. He clarified that it is his opinion that if something cannot be sold, it cannot be shown as having cash value and therefore would like to see real numbers. He commented that if people rent the event center electively it would add value and could increase customer base to related businesses in the community.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that he did hesitate to add that cash value to the sheet and noted that perhaps he will delete that from future planning documents. He also appreciated the comments from Councilmember Heineman. He stated that the existing Ramsey businesses could benefit from the additional people coming into the community and noted that there would also be benefit to ancillary uses for an event center that could come into the community as well.

Commissioner Leistico commented that the concept looks promising with a lot of great potential. She stated that she appreciated the comparison information and locations. She noted that she is leery of the cost of the renovation as the trend for farmhouse weddings could change. She asked if there is a plan B.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that this is a unique concept and unique for the area, which also pays homage to the rural sentiment of Ramsey. He believed that the venue would be popular for many types of events, not just weddings. He stated that meeting space of that size would be in demand. He stated that the building at Elmcrest would cost well over \$1,000,000 to build today, therefore if the barns could be renovated for public use it would provide significant value. He stated that if the buildings are not being used there would not be much of a carrying cost or operational costs to the City as it is not intended to be heated or cooled.

Commissioner Walker stated that he has owned and managed golf courses throughout the country. He stated that at the end of 2031, he would prefer to see the negative number and the worst-case scenario rather than the projections shown. He stated that he did find the information from the other venues very helpful. He noted that perhaps the rental cost is reduced for the first year in order to potentially pull customers from other venues to consider this location.

Councilmember Heineman also suggested showing the worst-case scenario. He stated that almost all the other venues listed showed rates for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. He noted that the projections only showed one event per weekend and the City could be in the position to hold multiple events in a week. He suggested also showing that scenario.

Commissioner Loss asked if there is an estimate of the number of parking stalls that would be at the park to support large events.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that the parking area shown near the event space would not be sufficient for very large events. He noted that the parking for

field use could be used for events as well, providing a shuttle. He stated that they would attempt to find a sweet spot to provide enough parking without providing too much parking.

Chair Bennett noted that he attended a barn wedding similar in nature to what is being discussed. He noted that there was shuttle service from nearby hotels to and from the venue.

Councilmember Heineman again referenced the synergy between the EDA and Parks and Recreation. He noted that recommendations for local Ramsey businesses could be provided to those renting the facility.

Chair Bennett agreed that there could be some great sponsorship opportunities.

Commissioner Olson commented that the key word he heard tonight is amenity. He stated that this is a promising property with an interesting venue and potential. He stated that the facility could be used for many different types of events, and he finds this very exciting.

### **5.02: Implement Playground Replacement Policy**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that the Commission worked on the Playground Replacement Policy for a good part of the last year, which has since been adopted by the City Council. He stated that the work would now focus on implementation. He noted that the ranking system was applied, and Rabbit Park continues to be on the top of the list. He stated that the 1,500-foot range has been identified and expanded to include 89 homes to be mailed notice. He stated that if there is not a lot of interest from the neighborhood to replace Rabbit Park, they could look to remove the playground and review alternative options, then moving on to the next park on the list for playground equipment replacement.

Chair Bennett noted that the Commission had a lot of discussion on the policy and now is the time for implementation. He agreed that the Commission should move forward to implement this policy.

Commissioner Walker stated that he would like to have a plan B for Rabbit Park. He stated that he would like to have a plan in place for the scenario that the playground equipment is removed so that could be told to the residents.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that he would not want the City to provide that answer to residents but would instead ask that question of residents as to what they would desire for the space. He noted that the feedback would then be tabulated and reviewed in order to provide a recommendation of what is desired. He anticipated to get the mailer out and bring this back to the Commission at its February or March meeting.

Chair Bennett confirmed the consensus of the Commission that staff should move forward in implementing the policy.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that the mailer would be sent out to the identified residents, providing multiple methods for those residents to provide their input.

## **6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided details on a bench donation that has been received from a resident in memory of their loved one for Elmcrest Park which will be installed this spring. He provided an update on the Riverstone South development which has received the appropriate approvals and is moving forward with construction this spring. He stated that includes the tree fort park and the Commission will begin planning on that feature. He reviewed the cost data that was gained related to maintenance costs Elmcrest Park this past year.

Commissioner Loss asked if the turf maintenance costs were typical or whether that was impacted by the growth inhibitor.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that cost was included in the total.

Commissioner Walker asked the turf area within Elmcrest.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood estimated about 18 to 20 acres. He announced that the new Recreation Specialist began the previous day and is excited to join the team. He believed that she would attend the February meeting to provide a presentation on the Summer Draw Concert Season from 2021 and forecast for the 2022 season.

Commissioner Sis asked for an update on the issue related to the entrance to Elmcrest Park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that the City Council met in worksession to discuss negotiations for the purchase for some of that land and also provided direction in terms of code enforcement.

Commissioner Olson provided an update on the Bluebird Advocacy program. He stated that he would like to see a Bluebird house building event for residents to participate in. He noted that staff has said that there would funds available to provide materials for the birdhouses. He believed that this would be a good community event.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reported that the rinks are open, and he is glad to see them being used. He noted some of the challenges that outdoor rinks have seen related to weather and the trend in decreased use of outdoor skating rinks. He commented that 1,063 people have used the Central Park location while 443 people have used the school location in the past 21 days.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mark Riverblood  
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*