

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on September 8, 2022, at New Neighborhood Park, 14642 Snowy Owl Street, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Commission Members Present:      Chair Shane Bennett  
   Commissioner Nathan Barten  
   Commissioner Jennifer Leistico  
   Commissioner Dean Olson  
   Commissioner Brian Walker

Commission Members Absent:      Vice Chair Brandon Sis  
   Commissioner Justin Loss

Also Present:                              City Council Liaison Debra Musgrove  
   Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood

**1.      CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Bennett called the Park and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

**2.      CITIZEN INPUT**

None.

**3.      APPROVE AGENDA**

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

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

**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 August 11, 2022

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

## **5. COMMISSION BUSINESS**

### **5.01: Approve Concept Plans for Neighborhood Park in the Riverstone South Subdivision**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood noted that the Commission is familiar with the case and the previous recommendation related to Park Dedication which included land dedication and cash payment. He stated that the draft layout took into account the preservation of the existing trees. He noted that with this amount of shade it would be difficult to grow turf grass and therefore much of the border would be wooded. He identified the different elements on the plan and explained how those would layout on the actual site including the restrooms, circuitous boardwalk and playground path, natural play elements, and active play equipment.

Commissioner Leistico commented that the plans look awesome, and she likes the concept with the trees.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood acknowledged that more typical play areas would require much more tree clearing. He believed that adults would also enjoy walking around while the children play. He noted that this would be a nice shady enclave until the planted trees in the development begin to grow.

Chair Bennett commented that he likes the uniqueness of the plan as it encourages residents to try and visit different parks in the community. He stated that this would be different than anything the city currently has.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that although there was originally opposition to the trail connection by the developer, that is provided and would provide access to the Mississippi Regional Trail as well. He stated that staff has spoken to a local mom's group, and they appreciated the input on different playgrounds with different elements.

Commissioner Barten appreciated the effort to preserve the trees and use of mulch rather than something that would require more maintenance such as turf grass.

Chair Bennett asked if there would be cleanup of deadfall and smaller growth as part of the process.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood confirmed that there would be some cleanup of the trees, but they would preserve everything they can to begin with. He stated that the current plan avoids all of the trees. He commented that the plan is fun and unique, and so far, fits within the budget as well.

Chair Bennett stated that he can envision parents sitting in the circular area while their kids play.

Commissioner Barten asked if a firepit could go within the sitting circle.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that while that could be included, it has not been part of the plans because of the concerns that would come with unsupervised fires.

Commissioner Walker stated that perhaps a propane firepit could be used in a vending machine fashion. He stated that perhaps someone can put in two dollars for 15 or 30 minutes of fire. He noted that it could also be on a timer that would not allow use after 10 p.m.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood confirmed that could be designed, although it would not be cheap. He noted that there will be some outdoor hearths in Municipal Plaza which will expand the park use in that urban setting during the shoulder seasons.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there are any comments about the shady areas in the winter and whether there would be space for melting and/or snow removal.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that he has not thought about snow removal in the design—but conceivably some volunteers could clear snow on some boardwalks. He stated that the interior of the play area will have shade and therefore there will not be a lot of melting. He stated that they could provide some plastic shovels that people may use to clear snow in the earlier snow events. He noted that as the season goes on the snow tends to be more compact and people navigate along. He stated that perhaps as the development is built out, people would perhaps adopt the park to clear the boardwalk.

Commissioner Walker stated that perhaps instead of the planks running width wise, it would be easier to remove snow if the planks ran the other way.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that the curvilinear aspects would make that difficult and it would increase costs significantly.

Commissioner Olson commented that this is existing for the city, and he likes the rustic elements and uniqueness. He stated that perhaps there would be snowshoeing opportunities because it is more wooded and rustic. He asked if staff has considered placing an emergency phone in the restroom area.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director replied that he did not have experience with emergency phones, but it seems most children over the age of eight carry cellphones. He stated with the proximity to homes, he would think there would be some supervision and the park is close to the homes. He stated that this development will be more dense than some of the other subdivisions in Ramsey and therefore most people will know each other. He stated that the parks department did offer a learn to snowshoe program last winter and they could build upon that.

Motion by Commissioner Barten, seconded by Commissioner Olson, to move forward for additional final planning and develop plans and specifications as discussed.

Further discussion: Councilmember Musgrove asked if the potential firepit is included or whether that could be something to consider in the future. Chair Bennett confirmed that the consensus was not to include that element at this time but to perhaps pursue that in the future if desired.

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

### **5.02: Consider Sculptural Carving of Two Dead Oaks at Sunfish Lake Park**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that there are two magnificent burr oaks at Sunfish Lake Park that sadly died at the same time. He stated that he wanted to see if there was something they could do with those trees. He noted that while at a nature-based park it would be appropriate to leave dead trees for wildlife habitat, these are near the canoe area and for safety purposes they do need to be addressed, due to concern for falling limbs. He stated that the concept of doing something sculptural was brought forward. He stated that he reached out to three tree services and only one was interested in removal of the trees and provided a cost estimate of about \$6,000 which did not include wood removal or stump removal. He noted that he also reached out to a professional chainsaw sculpture that could do the carving of the trees who provided a not to exceed amount of \$4,200. He stated that rather than paying \$6,000 for removal, they could have them carved in an artistic manner. He provided some examples of what could be carved into the trees. He commented that the carving and staining of the oaks would have a relatively long lifespan, even longer with some periodic maintenance from staff.

Chair Bennett agreed that those are both beautiful trees and they still look beautiful even dead, so it would be nice to see something done that would allow them to remain. He stated that he liked the introduction of wildlife and fish in the concept.

Commissioner Leistico asked if staff proposed these ideas or whether the artist proposed these ideas.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that he proposed the different concepts as they could be educational to children and would be a discovery type activity where kids could find new animals. He stated that he did not recommend the typical bear or eagle carving that is often done.

Chair Bennett agreed that he also liked the educational fable concepts which would tie into the different learning stations around the park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood agreed that would be a fun opportunity to explore.

Councilmember Musgrove was curious of the proximity of the neighbors and their input. She stated that she likes the concept with animals where kids would search for different animals and did not necessarily like the fable theme. She also liked the idea of a naming concept for the trees.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that they could poll the neighbors but would speculate that many would not respond. He stated that there could also be a variety of responses which would be hard to process. He noted that they could also receive as an example, a majority of suggestions for a totem pole which would not necessarily be appropriate. He confirmed that if more elements are added, it could increase the cost. He stated that if the creatures were too small or detailed, the features could be lost over time.

Commissioner Walker asked if the cost for someone to cut the tree, leaving the wood and stump was \$6,000.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood confirmed that was correct, for the two trees.

Commissioner Walker stated that he is not a big fan of the fable concept. He stated that he does like the animal concept. He stated that personally if the cost were \$6,000 to cut the trees, he would be interested in further discussing the design option that met that same cost.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood commented that the trees need to be addressed. He provided additional clarification.

Commissioner Barten stated that although it is a 40 percent increase, there would be a benefit in the carving.

Chair Bennett noted that there would be some cost-savings from not having to haul those large pieces of wood out of the park and not having the stump grinding.

Commissioner Barten stated that while he likes both concepts, he agrees with Commissioner Walker that the fable concept may not be preferred by all in the community and would prefer the option that is not so easily offensive.

Commissioner Leistico agreed that she would not want to see the typical bear or eagle.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how high the trees would be and whether some of the branches would remain.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that the artist was told to use as many of the branches as possible, although those were not included in the concept. He stated that the carver understands that the branching effect is desired. He confirmed that he had sufficient input from the Commission on the concept. He noted that once the plans are refined, he would forward for City Council consideration.

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

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that there are a lot of recreation programs featured in the report and staff continues to work on more ideas. He highlighted some of the new offerings and upcoming events.

Chair Bennett referenced the upcoming Happy Days events and stated that in the past the Commission has staffed the City tent for a portion of time. He asked if there would be parks related content and whether staffing by Commissioners is desired.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood confirmed that it would be helpful to have some Commission members present to help answer questions if they are available.

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mark Riverblood  
Parks & Assistant Public Works Director

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