

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on January 11, 2024, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Commission Members Present: Chair Nathan Barten
 Vice Chair Brandon Sis
 Commissioner Shane Bennett
 Commissioner Megan Ealain
 Commissioner Jennifer Leistico
 Commissioner Dean Olson

Commission Members Absent: Commissioner Todd Arts

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Barten 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 Bennett, to approve the Park and Recreation Commission meeting agenda as presented.

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

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

- Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes date December 14, 2023

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

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.01: Playground Replacement Plan – Alpine and River’s Bend Parks

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood presented background information on the City’s playground replacement plan noting that they had begun to discuss plans for River’s Bend and Alpine Park at the last meeting. He stated that if a recommendation is made by the Commission tonight, this would move forward to the City Council at the January 23rd meeting for the projects to take place this spring. He reviewed the existing playground conditions for both River’s Bend and Alpine parks. He recognized that the scale of Alpine, as a community park and playground would be larger than neighborhood parks. He reviewed the playground area that was identified for contractors to include in their plans. He stated that three staff members reviewed the proposals in order to make a recommendation to the Commission on the Alpine Park playground proposals. He stated that group narrowed the proposals and presented those to the Commission for both options A and B. He reviewed the proposed costs for both the River’s Bend playground refurbishment and new engineered wood fiber surfacing as well as the new playground for Alpine Park. He stated that would leave approximately \$25,000 that could be used as contingency and for landscaping and would still be under the \$200,000 budget estimate for the two projects.

Commissioner Sis commented that this appears to be a sound method to proceed and agreed with the proposal that was recommended by the staff committee.

Commissioner Bennett thanked staff for this approach to the process, recognizing that they have tried a variety of approaches and believed that this committee was a good method. He also supported the proposal recommended by the staff committee as it provides a large play value and expands the scope of the play area.

Commissioner Leistico commented that she also agrees with the staff choice and believes that adding trees would provide more character to Alpine as well.

Commissioner Bennett stated that he also agrees and noted that the last time the Commission visited the park it was noted that the current play area is difficult to see from the ball fields. He commented that this would open that up and provide better visibility which will be a benefit for families. He asked if there would be a potential to thematically coordinate the colors of the play equipment with the blue in the Alpine sign.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood confirmed that colors can be selected as desired. He stated that perhaps a middle ground between the sky blue and middle blue would be a good choice. He stated that the staff committee also suggested creating a mowed strip around the swings to prevent the brush area from encroaching.

Chair Barten commented that he likes the idea of matching the colors as suggested. He stated that he liked the last two options and liked that the staff option has a lesser cost which provides more room for the additional space which would add value to the park.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that there was previous discussion on whether the swings would need to be redone or kept as is. She believed that the recommended option included new swings in a new location. She commented that she did like the spinning feature included in the larger option that is recommended.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood echoed that feature is very popular. He stated that the orientation of the swings was changed in order to fit the desired features with the required fall zones.

Councilmember Musgrove asked where the current trail would be located compared to the playground.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood provided details on the other existing park features and trails, as those are not shown within the proposals.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there would be room for flowers or other landscaping.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that they did attempt to establish wildflowers and native plantings in the area adjacent to the playground, but it was not established and was overtaken by invasives. He stated that he would recommend that it become lawn around the playground area, with a mowed path around near the brush to prevent that from overtaking and creeping towards the playground.

Commissioner Olson commented that he does like the color and believes that this will be a good upgrade to the park. He noted that this will also be a benefit to children who have siblings playing ball. He also believed that the upgrades proposed at both parks would lessen the maintenance demands on staff. He asked if the playground equipment would have a warranty and the estimated lifespan.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood confirmed that there is a warranty and noted that the equipment also comes with a maintenance plan and tool kit to complete repairs. He stated that there is also excellent availability for replacement parts for this brand of play equipment.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Sis, to recommend City Council authorize up to \$200,000 from the Lawful Gambling Fund for the refurbishment of River's Bend Park's playground and engineered wood fiber, and the replacement of Alpine Park's playground, pursuant to the proposals received and the playground replacement plan.

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

5.02: Approve Landscape for Central Park Main Parking Lot Reconstruction, Improvement Project #23-03

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that the Commission and City Council have discussed the parking lot reconstruction project at Central Park since 2021/2022 and the Commission has provided various recommendations. He stated that the parking lot has been completed but the landscaping was held back as parking lot contractors typically do not complete landscaping and would instead use a subcontractor at a higher cost. He displayed photos of the existing parking lot medians. He stated that the landscaping and irrigation elements have been estimated at a cost of \$55,000 or less and therefore asked that the Commission recommend that the City Council pursue quotes for the landscaping and irrigation with a not to exceed cost of \$55,000 noting that funding would come from the Park Trust Fund. He provided a brief overview of the landscaping elements proposed.

Chair Barten asked if the swales would be wet enough to support the trees proposed.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that swale would provide the ideal condition, noting that irrigation would be included to use in dry conditions to ensure the plants and trees survive.

Commissioner Sis asked the estimated length of years it would take for the trees to provide shade value.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that the 12-foot trees would provide shade value immediately and that would continue to grow each year. He noted that some of the tree species could grow three feet per year.

Commissioner Sis asked if there is concern from the birch litter plugging up drainage.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that for the first year they would most likely put fabric over the inlet to catch woodchips and other items. He stated that following that, the organic material dropping from the trees would be absorbed back into the ground, or swept up with the parking lot sweeping.

Motion by Commissioner Sis, seconded by Commissioner Olson, to recommend to City Council the completion of the Central Park Main Parking Lot Reconstruction project, with installation of landscape and irrigation at a not-to-exceed amount of \$55,000 from the Park Trust Fund.

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

5.03: The WaterFront – Trails and Trees, a 2024 CIP

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood presented background information on The Waterfront and progress that has been made in The COR. He noted the investment in development within the COR that has occurred in the past several years, some choosing their location based on the future plans for the park and Waterfront. He recapped the discussion the Commission had related to The Waterfront at its last meeting and noted that the intention tonight is for the Commission to consider making a recommendation related to the trails, trees and other related

elements. He estimated a cost of \$300,000 and noted the value that those elements would provide to residents walking around this area. He noted a segment of the trail that is proposed to be crushed granite which would be used in the interim until the boardwalk is constructed in its place.

Commissioner Sis asked the approximate distance around the WaterFront.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood estimated that the loop would be about one mile.

Commissioner Sis asked for more information on the wall proposed to the southwest.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that a low wall is proposed between the trail and slope into the water. He stated that the boulder wall would be one to two feet high composed of natural fieldstone.

Councilmember Musgrove referenced the estimate of \$300,000 for these elements and noted that the CIP includes \$1,200,000 for improvements other than the building. She asked about the other improvements that would be proposed or whether this would be all that is proposed for phase one.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that placeholder has been within the CIP for many years and contemplated development of either/both of this site and Municipal Plaza. He stated that ideally, he would like to see outdoor fireplaces in Municipal Plaza along with irrigation and other elements. He stated that Municipal Plaza and the WaterFront are both included within that CIP item.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if those would be proposed to come forward this year as well.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that he would like to see that occur but noted that there are a lot of projects going on and recognized the time to develop those plans and specifications. He confirmed that is one of staff's priorities.

Chair Bennett stated that the name of the new lake has been a topic of discussion on social media and asked if that has been considered, noting that internally that is referred to as a pond.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that if the City wants to name the pond that could be done. He believed that The Waterfront would be sufficient but commented that there could be a naming contest or something of that nature, but perhaps should not be referred to as a lake as it is a stormwater pond.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Sis, to recommend to City Council authorization of the preparation of Plans and Specifications for the trail and related elements for The Waterfront, and obtaining bids for the same.

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

5.04: Recommend Trail Gap Construction, a 2024 Capital Improvement Project

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that there has been a placeholder in the CIP for many years related to trail gap construction. He displayed the trail loop and spokes within that provides trail connections throughout the community. He noted that residents always desire more trails, recognizing the cost and maintenance. He identified two trail gaps and reviewed details on a trail gap opportunity that the Commission could consider. He provided cost estimates and noted that the request tonight is to recommend the development of plans and specifications for the T.H. 47 trail gap.

Chair Barten commented that he enjoys seeing these trail gaps addressed as even these small gaps can be important for people that would potentially walk or bike to work or for other purposes.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood commented that the daycare is a type of retail establishment that could appreciate that, as people living near the daycare could walk there. He stated that it would be similar for the auto repair business, as residents living nearby could drop their vehicle off for repair and walk back to their home.

Chair Barten agreed that this would add value.

Commissioner Sis asked if the costs would be offset or recouped if there is development on the vacant lot.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that may be partially true, as the City has the ability to require certain development fees at the time of platting. He stated that some of these lots were platted in the 1980s. He stated that the new development could perhaps complete the grading and trail preparation with the City then paving the trail all at one time.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she has seen a lot of work and development within The COR and believes that this area also has potential for increased growth. She commented that this area is walked by the public which shows the demand for the trail connection. She asked about the potential for T.H. 47 improvements and whether that would impact a trail.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood commented that in 2028, MnDOT is going to repave T.H. 47 in this area and there will be some improvements to the pedestrian facilities around the CR 5 and T.H. 47 intersection. He commented that T.H. 47 has a tight right-of-way and therefore the City does not want to construct the trail within that right-of-way.

Commissioner Bennett commented that as previously stated, there is demand for this trail segment as shown by the foot traffic already going through that area.

Commissioner Sis appreciated that staff has considered future improvements to the roadway and are planning a trail which would not be impacted by that.

Motion by Commissioner Sis, seconded by Commissioner Bennett, to recommend to City Council the preparation of Plans and Specifications and authorization to obtain bids for T.H. 47 Trail gap.

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

6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that December was unseasonably warm which prevented establishing outdoor ice. He stated that they have begun flooding the outdoor rink and anticipated that the rink would open mid-week next week. He noted that it would be an abbreviated skating season this year. He stated that within the packet were a list of upcoming recreation programs including Frost Fest and options for residents 55 plus.

Councilmember Musgrove thanked the staff members that participated in the playground proposal review.

Chair Barten welcomed new Commission member, Commissioner Ealaine.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Olson, to adjourn the meeting.

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

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Riverblood
Parks & Assistant Public Works Director

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.