

**PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

**MONDAY JANUARY 25, 2021**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Committee Members present: Scott Creighton, Ken Halverson, Scott Marotz, Jack Merwin, Doug Peterson, and Laura Talvitie.

Also present: Recreation and Communication Coordinator Corrie Scott, City Engineer Layne Otteson, and Streets, Parks, and Fleet Superintendent Norm Michels.

**3. ADOPT AGENDA**

Committee Member Marotz motioned to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Committee Member Creighton, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Committee Member Creighton motioned to accept the December 28, 2020 Parks Advisory Committee minutes as presented. Seconded by Committee Member Merwin, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

**5. BUSINESS**

**5A. BROM PARK UPDATE AND DISCUSSION**

Otteson reviewed that staff has been investigating an opportunity to create a neighborhood park on City owned property at the intersection of Brom Lane and Tarrytown Road. The land is generally low and a preliminary assessment indicates that much of the park would be classified as wetland. Previously the wetland issue caused staff to look for other locations as being more viable. No other options in the area have presented themselves as viable.

Otteson reported that although the wet nature of the property can be seen as challenging, Staff is looking for cost effective opportunities which may improve the elevation or utilize the natural setting. An open house and questionnaire with the neighborhood could take

place after a formal wetland review and viable options are explored. Staff is looking for feedback from the Parks Members.

Halverson asked about the type of soil and how it effects installing sidewalks on a parcel with wetlands. Otteson stated that if the sand is wet, but the type of sand is the same throughout the portion of sidewalk, it will raise and lower uniformly and it wouldn't create many problems. The need for a culvert would potentially be problematic with sidewalks due to the differing rates of freezing.

Otteson talked about introducing a park with Astroturf that could be considered ADA compliant. Halverson asked if there are grants available for an ADA compliant park. Otteson stated that staff would need to research these opportunities, but that they are likely. Peterson asked if Astroturf would work for winter weather. Marotz stated that there are vendors in Minnesota that offer Astroturf for outdoor parks and facilities, but they are more expensive than mulch. He also stated that there could be long term cost savings because mulch needs to be replaced every few years. Otteson stated that it would be important to look into before investing in, because there could be implications due to the wetlands or increased costs due to maintenance.

Marotz mentioned that this potential park is proposed to be much smaller than previous parks such as Sanford Select and Norland Park, which will likely lower the overall costs of equipment, infrastructure, and irrigation. Otteson stated that a potential benefit and cost saver to Astroturf is that it doesn't require irrigation. Halverson asked if there is access to water hook ups on the Brom Lane parcel so that there could be irrigation if it is needed. Otteson confirmed that there are hook ups available.

Peterson asked if the wetland survey has been scheduled. Otteson stated that it is not scheduled, but that this is the next step. Creighton stated that it is important to reach out to the neighborhoods surrounding the potential park to see what the need is for the area. Marotz asked about the price of a wetland survey and if the Park Dedication Fund could cover those costs.

Otteson asked about how far of a radius the Parks Advisory Committee would like to send out a public notice for the potential Brom Park Open House. Scott also stated that an online survey that is sent out to residents via Facebook and the City's website is another option. Otteson stated that it is important to focus on the residents that live near Brom Lane and are more likely to utilize the park rather than the entirety of the Big Lake community because this will likely be a small neighborhood park that is more heavily utilized by residents that live nearby.

Marotz asked what the demographic is for the area near Brom Lane. Halverson stated that he lives in the neighborhood and there are quite a few young families in the area. Marotz stated that it is important to calculate the costs of infrastructure for this parcel prior to deciding which equipment is installed to ensure that the proposed project is feasible. Marotz recommended reaching out to Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation to see if

they are interested in making the proposed park an educational area. Talvitie brought up that the Boy Scouts presented to the Parks Committee in the past and that they recommended equipment that wasn't being considered by the Committee. She stated it would be important to get feedback from children in the area to ensure that money is being spent on equipment that will be used. Creighton mentioned that it is also important to consider COVID-19 and equipment that is easy to sanitize or spaces that are easy to social distance. Otteson stated that due to COVID-19 there are also a lot of grandparents taking care of their grandchildren and that it is important to ensure safe access to newly built parks.

Talvitie stated that two parks that her children specifically request to visit are Sanford Select and Highline Park because they like the equipment at those parks. Halverson asked how long it takes to get land surveyed. Otteson stated that a survey might have to take place after snow has melted. Otteson stated that in the meantime staff could send out a questionnaire to see what area residents prefer for park equipment. Creighton stated that we should keep the questionnaire specific so that residents don't ask for a large amenity that isn't feasible for the area. Otteson stated that there should be both specific questions and open ended questions.

Marotz stated that there should be a question about surfacing, but that the Committee should be careful not to lead the survey taker to choosing the surface that the Committee prefers. He also stated that one question that would be important is asking the age group that the playground equipment should be tailored to. Marotz stated that there is a lot of upkeep for a gazebo or other park structure and that aside from the structures at Lakeside Park, they tend to be underutilized. Merwin recommended including more natural options in the survey for equipment and surfacing. Marotz stated that a concern brought up by residents near Brom Lane is the traffic on Tarrytown that can be considered dangerous.

Creighton asked staff their preferences for this proposed park. Michels stated that due to the amount of trees on the parcel near Brom Lane, he sees AstroTurf potentially taking more time to maintain, but that he doesn't oppose to the idea. Marotz recommended meeting with a vendor who supplies AstroTurf to ask them questions about the potential disadvantages.

Scott stated that she will work with Otteson to put together a survey for residents through Survey Monkey and will send out the draft to the Parks Committee for feedback prior to posting it for residents to take.

## **5B. 2021 CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR POSITIONS**

Scott reviewed that in 2020, the Parks Advisory Committee Chair and Vice-Chair positions were held by Denise McDowall-Seyko and Doug Peterson, respectively.

Staff is asking the Committee to: 1) discuss if they would like to either volunteer for one of the positions or nominate another Commissioner; and 2) make a motion to recommend appointments to the Parks Advisory Committee Chair and Vice-Chair positions for 2021.

Committee Member Marotz motioned to recommend Peterson for the Chair position in 2021. Seconded by Committee Member Creighton, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

Committee Member Creighton motioned to recommend Talvitie for the Vice-Chair position in 2021. Seconded by Committee Member Peterson, unanimous ayes, motion carried.

## **5C. PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE BYLAWS REVIEW**

Scott reviewed that in 2020, City staff discovered that the Parks Advisory Committee Bylaws were not up to date with how the Committee was operating. After making updates to the Bylaws, the Parks Advisory Committee recommended that staff bring the Bylaws to the Parks Advisory Committee for review annually in January. Staff is asking the Committee to review current Bylaws and recommend any suggested changes to City Council.

Marotz stated that he didn't have any suggested changes. The Committee agreed to bring the Parks Advisory Committee Bylaws to the January 2022 meeting for another annual review.

## **5D. STAFF UPDATES**

Scott reviewed the following:

- 1. Vacant Seat:** City Council appointed Ken Halverson as the 2021 Council Liaison and Scott Marotz has been reappointed as the Planning Commission Liaison. There were no applications submitted by the extended January 18, 2021 deadline for the vacant Parks Committee seat. Staff has again extended the deadline to Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.
- 2. Parks and Trails**
  - a. Highline Drive Trail Construction:** The City was awarded 80% of the total construction costs during the 2018-2019 MnDOT grant cycle, totaling \$285,597.00. Per grant conditions, The City is required to construct the project within five (5) years of receiving award (June 30, 2023). The project timeline, per Project Lead Layne Otteson, is as follows:
    - i. Design: summer 2021
    - ii. Bid: Winter 2021-2022
    - iii. Construct: Spring 2022
  - b. Ice Rinks:** The hockey rinks were opened to the public on the weekend of January 16, 2021. The figure skating rink is also open, but is not good

quality ice and due to warm weather, it is likely to close earlier this year than normal. Due to Governor's Orders the warming house is closed to the public, but there are benches and a portable toilet available for the public to use.

- c. **Adopt a Park:** Staff is considering putting together an Adopt a Park Program in 2021 to help the Public Works Department during spring and fall when their workload is substantial. Staff has researched area communities' programs to compare their formatting. Recommendations from Parks Members is appreciated.

### 3. Programming

- a. **Winter Farmers Market:** The Winter Farmers Market will take place at City Hall from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. every third Saturday from November to April. The January market had record attendance with 127 shoppers, not including vendors and staff. Historically, January is the slowest market of the winter season and last year's January market only had 60 shoppers attend in comparison. The next market takes place on February 20, 2021.
- b. **Summer Farmers Market:** Staff is working on recruiting vendors, seeking sponsorship, and scheduling food trucks and musicians.
- c. **Community Garden:** Applications for the Community Garden are open to the general public. Staff expects them to be filled by early February. Due to high demand this year, it is likely that gardeners will be limited to only one plot per household. The Group Gardening Program is also open for registration at the Community Education website.
- d. **Music in the Park:** The Legacy Foundation has dissolved and the City is looking at the possibility of transitioning the Music in the Park series to a City-run program hosted by the Recreation and Communication Coordinator.

- 4. **Rebranding:** Como Lake Marketing Team brought some suggested logos and taglines to the BLEDA and are currently using the BLEDA and staff feedback to refine the options.

Merwin asked if there is a conflict of interest for a current Parks Members' family member to apply. Halverson stated that the vote is equal for all Parks Members and there shouldn't be any issue with having two Members related to each other on the Parks Committee.

Otteson stated that although staff is hoping to complete the trail on Highline drive by 2022, there is a chance it could take longer, but due to grant deadlines the trail will should completed in full by summer 2023 at the latest.

Creighton asked staff if the City has a written lease with the neighboring church for the use of the land including the ice rinks. Halverson stated that in the past the City and the

## Big Lake Parks Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: January 25, 2021

Page 6 of 7

neighboring church came to an agreement regarding the hockey rinks when curbing was installed around the church's property. Scott stated that she would research this agreement and bring more information to the February Parks meeting.

Halverson commented that when the Adopt a Park program is created, that staff should reach out to the local boy scout troop to see if they'd like to participate. Peterson asked how frequently groups that sign up for Adopt a Park will clean their adopted park. Scott stated that this hasn't been decided, but the minimum would be at least twice a year in the spring and fall. Peterson stated that an Adopt a Park program will create buy-in from community groups and that he supports the creation of the program.

Halverson asked about using brick and mortar Big Lake restaurants rather than food trucks for the Music in the Park program. Scott stated that she would welcome any local restaurant that would be interested in setting up at Lakeside Park, but that usually brick and mortar restaurants do not reach out for offsite events because they are not equipped to sell food outside of their restaurant. Scott also stated that she will continue to work with local food trucks and vendors that set up at other events such as the Farmers Market and Movie in the Park if the City does take on the Music in the Park event. Creighton asked if the City has considered relocating the Music in the Park series so that it is easier for local restaurants and vendors to set up. Scott stated that there aren't other non-City owned areas that have been considered because it would increase the cost of the event and it would increase the amount of staff time to haul the City's equipment to another area to use for the day of the event.

Halverson asked if the Legacy Foundation had any funds from previous years that the City can use for the Music in the Park event if it becomes City-run. Scott stated that all of the Legacy Foundation's remaining funds were donated to Options, Inc. as they had sponsored the event in the past and have been struggling financially due to COVID. Marotz stated that in previous years the City has researched the potential of installing infrastructure at Lakeside Park that would allow for restaurants to serve food at events, but that the state health and safety requirements were incredibly strict and the costs would be immense. He also stated that the City has approached local restaurants to set up at local events at Lakeside Park and the majority of the feedback was that they didn't have the equipment or staff to set up at an event while their restaurant was in operation.

Halverson commented that he would like to look into creating City owned ballfields. He stated that ballfields would be a good investment as they bring money into the community. Creighton stated that communities in Northern Minnesota have private farms and businesses that purchase public ballfields. Halverson asked the Committee why they haven't pursued purchasing land and building ballfields. Marotz stated that investing in purchasing land and building ballfields isn't feasible for the Park Dedication Fund which is the only source of funding for the Parks Committee. He recommended that Halverson bring the idea of ballfields to the City Council for review as the City Council would need to approve and fund the creation of ballfields in Big Lake.

Halverson also commented that he opposes the City purchasing the parcel near A&W because it could bring in a large amount of taxes if purchased by a private developer. He stated that if the City needs more parking options, they should allow for parking on streets near Lakeside Park rather than purchasing new land to offer parking.

**6. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' REPORTS**

7. **OTHER** – None.

**8. ADJOURN**

Committee Member Talvitie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 p.m. Seconded by Committee Member Creighton, unanimous ayes, meeting adjourned.