

**City of Woodbury
Woodbury City Hall
8301 Valley Creek Road
Woodbury, MN 55125
651-714-3583**

**Minutes of
Parks and Natural Resources Commission Regular Meeting
Tuesday, February 7, 2023**

Commission Members Present:	Anna Doherty, Charles Eckberg, Bruce Montgomery (Co-chair), Deborah Musser (Chair), Edward Myatt, Wallace Wadd, Noah Yehalashet
Commission Member(s) Absent:	Commissioner Timothy Brewington
Councilmember:	Councilmember Jennifer Santini
Staff Present:	Michelle Okada, Parks and Recreation Director Josh Kinney, Parks Planner Jennifer McLoughlin, Sr. Environmental Resources Coordinator Eric Searles, Assistant Community Development Director/City Planner Reed Smidt, Recreation Manager Belinda Reed, Recording Secretary
Staff Virtual:	Jodi Sauro, Parks and Recreation Coordinator

1. Call to Order

Chair Musser called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Introductions

Ms. Okada welcomed the Commissioners to the first 2023 meeting. Introductions were made with each Commissioner sharing a little bit about themselves, as well as what interested each to volunteer to serve on the advisory commission: Parks and Natural Resources Commission (PNRC). Staff members present shared their backgrounds and positions with the City.

3. Open Forum

Member(s) of the public were in attendance in-person and virtually.

4. Special Order of Business

- A. Councilmember Santini administered the Oath of Office to new Commission members: Anna Doherty, Charles Eckberg, Edward Myatt and Student Commissioner Noah Yehalashet.

5. Action Items

- A. December 6, 2022, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Meeting Minutes

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Chair Musser asked for the approval of the Minutes of the December 6, 2022, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Commission.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Montgomery, seconded by Commissioner Wadd, to approve the December 6, 2022, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Minutes.

Vote: In favor All
Against None
Absent Commissioner Brewington

6. Westwind Development – Memorandum No. 23 – 01

Ms. Okada introduced Assistant Community Development Director/City Planner, Eric Searles, noting Mr. Searles would be guiding the Commissioner through the development process.

Mr. Searles provided a brief history of the Master Plan, which guides the development process highlighting the location of the Westwind Development. In September of 2021, following review and support from the PNRC, the City Council approved the South of Dale Master Plan. Mr. Searles noted that the Master Plan guides decisions for development with infrastructure needs, including parks and open spaces.

Mr. Searles noted that the development is being brought before the PNRC to provide opportunity to review the development proposal as it relates to the park dedication, park and trails issues and pedestrian and bike access. Mr. Searles highlighted the trails and sidewalks throughout the development noting loops and strong connections to the citywide network, location of the park and wetlands, and the greenway corridor.

Discussion ensued with regard to criteria used to establish how big the park should be in relation to number of residents served. It was noted that in the Comprehensive Plan, there is guidance on the types of park space and park proximity, with the goal of having park or open space sites within 1/2 mile of residents, this includes other public amenities such as schools. With the number of park spaces proposed in the Master Plan, the process looks at how each park area supports the overall park system needs, versus making a standard of having a certain acre size in any one location.

Mr. Searles highlighted the FAA weather tower location, which communicates with the airport, in relation to the Westwind Development, noting the tower has been in that location for several years.

With regard to ordinances and regulations that apply to the park development, Mr. Searles noted that during the process, any items that are not meeting the ordinances or are requesting flexibility of an ordinance, staff will bring any non-compliance to be reviewed by the Commission. It was noted that Commissioners are not obligated to be experts in all the policies or ordinances of the community; rather, their role is when there is flexibility to policy, to provide guidance in that matter.

Chair Musser called for a motion.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Montgomery, seconded by Commissioner Myatt, to affirm that the proposed park and trail network, within the Westwind subdivision is consistent with the adopted policies, ordinances, regulations, and the Comprehensive Plan, as they relate to park dedication, park and trail issues, and pedestrian and bicycling access.

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Vote: In favor All
 Against None
 Absent Commissioner Brewington

7. Environmental Stewardship – Memorandum No. 23 – 02

Ms. Okada provided the background with regard to the 2022 PNRC work on drafting the strategic initiative that was presented and approved by the City Council as one of the Council's strategic initiatives for the next two-year period. Ms. Okada noted that a monthly update, on the project, will be included as part of each PNRC meeting going forward.

Ms. Okada introduced Senior Environmental Resources Coordinator, Jennifer McLoughlin.

Ms. McLoughlin noted that the **Project Charter**, is used for larger City projects, to not only clarify and define the project purpose and summarize the objectives, but also identify staff to be involved with working on the project, as well as outlining project milestones and timelines.

The **Project Scope** focuses on City programs that the City has control over, with regard to City policies, not necessarily regional, state or federal regulations.

It was noted that currently, the project is on track with the timeline outlined in the initiative. Ms. Okada noted that the recommended consultant will be reviewed by the PNRC for its stamp of approval, prior to being presented to the City Council for their final approval, including budget approval.

It was noted that robust community engagement is being planned in order to identify the priorities of the community as a whole. A discussion ensued about a desire to hire a consultant, to help guide us through the work that would require specialization in community engagement, offering different opportunities to participate in the community engagement with stakeholder mapping, to make sure we are reaching as many residents as possible. Ms. Okada noted that the PNRC will have different touch points throughout the process.

Ms. McLoughlin noted that the Implementation Plan will be based on the environmental stewardship plan, based on the Environmental Strategic initiative.

There was consensus from the PNRC affirming the Project Charter and Project Scope.

8. Park at Canvas North Concept Plan – Memorandum No. 23 – 03

Ms. Okada noted that now that the development is occurring, the development of the park planned for that park space is next.

Mr. Kinney noted the location of the public park, located on .7 acres, and will provide inter-connectivity with trail and sidewalk access to and from surrounding neighborhoods. It was noted that the park name has not yet been determined; it is being reviewed by the Park Lands and Recreational Facilities Naming Advisory Committee, along with a few other park locations.

Ms. Kinney highlighted the amenities proposed, which have been prioritized for the park space, including dual lined tennis/pickleball court, playground, picnic area, benches, trees for shade and native plantings to provide pollinator habitat and enhanced storm water quality. Parking for the park was identified along Conifer Pass.

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There was PNRC consensus with the concept plan for the park.

9. La Lake Park Concept Plan – Memorandum No. 23 – 04

Mr. Kinney highlighted the 76.62 acre park location describing the park as consisting of mostly upland and the lake itself, with access off of Bailey Road and Military Road, noting use of the park has increased over time. The site offers not only unique characteristics, but all opportunities to enhance and promote the natural setting. The rural area near La Lake, with larger lots, was described as a less served park and trail area of the City.

In planning the development of this space, Mr. Kinney noted that the process, which includes addressing the needs, desires and opportunities, has included both public and internal engagement with two open houses having been held: December 6, 2022 and January 11, 2023, at which there was support for the project and amenities being considered. It was noted that features that people are looking for in the park include enough parking, access to running water and restroom. The park development will also include addressing drainage issues and storm water management.

The Commission reviewed the concept plan as presented. Mr. Kinney noted that the park would remain intact, with amenities to be incorporated into the space. Some of the project priorities that had been identified including a larger open-air shelter, wayfinding and interpretation and a permeable parking lot. Part of the presentation included a drawing of an open-air shelter (A frame) with a fire pit in a more remote area of the park, which would be accessed by hiking into the area.

The park development is anticipated to be completed in phases.

A discussion ensued with regard to the steep/cliff grade shore area on the lake, woodland, plants and animals. It was noted that horse hoof imprints have been observed at the park. Staff verified that horse riding is prohibited as outlined in the Parks and Recreation Chapter of the City Code: Animals 16.51.

Mr. Kinney noted that staff has been working closely with the environmental staff during the design phase studying the drainage issues with the existence of high flows of water, with a natural outlet but no rate control on the outlet, with the flow to the west toward Ria Lake, south into Newport.

Ms. Okada encouraged the Commissioners to visit and experience the park during each of the four seasons.

It was suggested that consideration be made to include electric car charging in the parking area. A native prairie with natural, flowers blooming to attract different animals, birds, insects to create an evolving experience, was mentioned. Although providing accessible trails for all individuals, it was also noted that there is a desire for soft-surface, natural trails as well.

A suggestion was made to install larger and more prominent park signage to identify La Lake Park.

There was Commission consensus affirming the concept of the park plan and amenities being considered.

10. Discussion Items¹

¹ Discussion and updates are intended to be informational or of brief inquiry. More substantial discussion of matter under status updates and miscellaneous should be scheduled for a future agenda.

A. Current Projects – Status Update

It was noted that construction of a number of projects in the parks will take place in the spring.

Ms. Okada highlighted the Angel of Hope memorial noting staff are working with the citizen group on the memorial to honor children that have passed, that will be located near the Veterans and Public Safety memorials. A formal agreement with the Woodbury Community Foundation will be presented to the City Council for approval, prior to a ground-breaking in the spring.

11. Monthly Update – Memorandum No. 23 – 05

Ms. Okada noted that staff is busy behind the scenes planning for the upcoming year.

12. Council Report – Councilmember Santini

Councilmember Santini noted the City Council is in full swing and work continues on the water project with its number of touch points before the Council.

13. Announcements/Miscellaneous

Ms. Okada noted the Consent to Release Data forms provided to the Commissioners by the City Clerk's office, are due back on Friday, Feb. 10.

Ms. Okada noted that the monthly agendas are anticipated to be robust, and will include Environmental Stewardship monthly touch points.

The Commissioners joined Chair Musser in congratulating Recreation Manager, Reed Smidt on being awarded the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association's (MRPA) Jack Niles award, which recognizes a male professional member of the MRPA, with 10 plus years of professional experience and outstanding service to the parks and recreation field, and to the MRPA, along with Mr. Okada having been named President-elect of that organization for 2024.

The Commission discussed how they would prefer the meeting room set-up for upcoming monthly meetings with either continuing to have one person per table, or seat two at each table, side by side. The consensus was to have two seated, side by side per table.

14. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Belinda Reed

Belinda Reed
Administrative Assistant

Approved by the Parks and Natural Resources Commission on March 7, 2023.