

**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, Feb. 8, 2022**

Commission Members Present: Chair Greta Bjerckness, Arin Kurttila (Co-chair), Deborah Musser, Bruce Montgomery, Rachel Nelson, Wallace Wadd, Brandon Mersch, Emerson Siefken

Commission Member(s) Absent: None

Commission Member Virtual: Commissioner Timothy Brewington, II

Councilmember In-person: Councilmember Jennifer Santini

Staff Present: Michelle Okada, Parks and Recreation Director
Josh Kinney, Parks Planner
Reed Smidt, Recreation Manager
Belinda Reed, Recording Secretary
Sarah Alig, Senior Management Analyst
Jennifer McLoughlin, Sr. Environmental Resources Coordinator

Staff Virtual: Jodi Sauro, Parks and Recreation Coordinator
Kristin Seaman, Environmental Resources Specialist
Heidi Quinn, Environmental Resources Technician

Call to Order

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

Open Forum

None

Action Items

A. January 18, 2022, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Meeting Minutes

Chair Bjerckness asked for the approval of the Minutes of the January 18, 2022, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Commission.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery, to approve the January 18, 2022, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Minutes.

Vote: In favor All in-person and virtual
Against None
Absent None

Parks and Natural Resources Commission Minutes

February 8, 2022

Page 2

B. Environmental Stewardship 2001-2021 – Memorandum No. 22 – 03

Ms. Sarah Alig, senior management analyst, provided a presentation reviewing the memorandum provided to the Commission along with Ms. Jennifer McLoughlin, senior environmental resources coordinator. The presentation goals for the evening included providing an extensive history of the city's environmental stewardship work from 2001 to present, including natural environment, sustainability, potable water, surface water, and the broader context (suburban, planning, fiscal, social) as well as potential next chapters and consideration as a future strategic initiative to be discussed by the City Council at their June, 2022 workshop. Ms. Alig noted that there will be lots of decisions going forward to determine next steps; whether that be further investment or maintaining status quo.

Staff hoped the presentation created a shared understanding of past progress which may provoke the PNRC's curiosity, discussion and insight for future steps and future chapters.

Ms. Alig noted that the Comprehensive Plan is a guiding document for the city which reminds us as to what we are committed to. The Comprehensive Plan mission statement was reviewed.

Ms. Alig noted that staff, from many city departments brainstormed and helped to create an inventory of topics that rose to the surface as important items addressed in the past 20 years. The items were sorted and coordinated, and a timeline was created with appropriate dates.

A discussion took place about creating a larger vision and plan for the future and how having a plan in place would help take advantage of additional funds the government may make available.

A discussion took place regarding the city's use of benchmarks and performance measures and celebrating the many accomplishments over the years. With regard to next chapters, the priority of addressing the city's drinking water continues to require a lot of staff time and creativity.

Ms. Alig poised the following questions to encourage discussion:

1. What needs clarification?
2. What jumps out from the timeline?
3. What jumps out from the context?
4. What further information would you like to consider on this topic before the June City Council retreat?

A discussion took place with regard to how the city has tackled and responded to unforeseen items that have come up, including PFAS in the municipal water, Emerald Ash Borer and large rain events and the time, effort and funding required to address each. It was noted that long-term drinking water sustainability is currently a Council strategic initiative, with the water treatment plant construction to begin in the next few years.

A discussion took place with regard to cities in Minnesota that have declared a climate crisis. It was noted that the League of Women Voters has a scheduled Zoom event February 16, on Climate Action Plans.

Ms. Okada asked the Commissioners what further information they would like to consider on the topic of environmental stewardship, to assist them with a recommendation for the City Council prior to the Council's June, strategic planning workshop. It was noted that strategic plans usually have an end date rather than live on in perpetuity and are measurable and attainable. It was also

Parks and Natural Resources Commission Minutes

February 8, 2022

Page 3

noted that the biennial Community Survey results are also important in the process of identifying strategic initiatives.

There was a consensus that the Commission views the subject of environmental stewardship as urgent and in need of being addressed. The Commission also noted it would be helpful to hear what other cities are doing and how far they are in their process.

A discussion took place with regard to working with a consultant on a plan moving forward to address what Woodbury can do in the next 20, 40, 50 years, in terms of environmental stewardship.

Ms. Okada noted that the goal at the March PNRC meeting, will include discussion on prioritizing and understanding what is important to the PNRC, with pieces to include finances, seeking grants, consultant dollars and staff time, in order for staff to move forward with what the PNRC would like presented for City Council's consideration.

As Commissioners digest the report and timeline, they were asked to consider the following questions:

1. What items or narrative elements need clarification?
2. What jumps out to you from the historical narrative or present context?
3. What further information would you like to consider on this topic in the future?

C. Final Concept Approval Bridlewood Park - Memorandum No. 22 - 04

Mr. Kinney provided a review of the design process used for current concept plan development, schedule and potential approval of the plans. Locations were highlighted on the development map.

Mr. Kinney highlighted the playground concept plan. With regard to the relationship of the park itself to Bailey Lake Road, Mr. Kinney noted that research that regulates playgrounds in the United States, namely: Consumer Product Safety Commission, determine that nearby hazards such as roads and ponds could be mitigated by providing methods to contain the children in the playground with either a hedge or fence. The concept plan for the park hasn't changed since last presented with regard to the relationship of the park itself to Bailey Lake Road, however, the mitigation strategies have now been incorporated into the park plan with hedges.

It was noted by two Commissioners that they feel the location is less than ideal citing the roundabout, two roadways: Bailey Lake Road and Chestnut Drive, and the stormwater pond. There was a recommendation made to not develop a park in that location.

A discussion took place with regard to residents of the neighborhoods using the roadway and anticipated traffic increased once all the neighborhoods are built out. Existing parks in close proximity to roadways were reviewed including Fairway Meadows and Powers Lake East parks.

One Commissioner recommended not developing the park in the location. Staff noted the park location was predetermined during the development of the neighborhood. The city's Planning Commission and City Council, had also previously reviewed and approved the PUD for the development, including the park location.

A discussion took place with regards to the bump in along the curb on Bailey Lake Road and whether there was concern about cars being parked in that particular area. Ms. Okada noted that the park is not considered a destination park.

Parks and Natural Resources Commission Minutes

February 8, 2022

Page 4

The suggestion was made to widen the hedges on the roadway and stormwater pond sides of the park. Ms. Okada noted split rail fencing is a possibility with a hedge interior; however, it was noted that the hedges will take time to grow together. Edgewater Park was noted as having a split rail fence between the playground and water.

Chair Bjerckness asked for the approval of the final concept plan for the Bridlewood Park – Memorandum No. 22 - 04, with the added feature of a split rail fence along Bailey Lake Road and Chestnut Drive, if feasible, and if not feasible, that the concept plan be moved forward, as presented.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Kurttila, seconded by Commissioner Brewington, to approve the Final Concept Plan for the Bridlewood Park – Memorandum No. 22 – 04, with the added feature of a split rail fence along Bailey Lake Road and Chestnut Drive, if feasible, and if not feasible, that the concept plan be moved forward, as presented.

Vote: In favor Commissioners Bjerckness, Brewington, Kurttila, Musser,
Montgomery, Wadd
Against Commissioner Nelson
Absent None

D. Final Concept Approval Arbor Ridge Park – Memorandum No. 22-05

Mr. Kinney provided a review of the final concept plan for the yet to be named park in the Arbor Ridge Development noting the public engagement included a letter to the neighborhood and an open house. Highlights of the park included features to complement the existing pedestrian trail connection, access to existing natural resources present at the park site, a playground, picnicking, benches, and trees for shade and enhanced storm water quality

Chair Bjerckness asked for the approval of the final concept plan for the park yet to be named in the Arbor Ridge Development – Memorandum No. 22 - 05, as presented.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Montgomery, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to approve the Final Concept Plan for the yet to be named park located in the Arbor Ridge Development – Memorandum No. 22 - 05, as presented.

Vote: In favor All In-person and Virtual
Against None
Absent None

E. Final Concept Approval Hasenbank Woods and Fish Lake Vegetation Management and Restoration Project – Memorandum No. 22 – 06

Mr. Kinney noted that this project incorporates three distinct aspects to improve habitat, water quality and park usability over a period of three to five years. The project will include vegetative restoration of Hasenbank Woods, focusing on the protection of healthy oaks and other native trees, removal of buckthorn and other invasive species and the replanting of native species typical of oak savanna and oak woodlands. Practices will rely on the use of forestry mowing and goat grazing to remove invasive species in order to reduce the use of herbicides during site preparation.

Future project considerations could include treatment of waters entering Powers Lake through a series of Stormwater Best Management Practices integrated into naturalized park spaces along the

Parks and Natural Resources Commission Minutes

February 8, 2022

Page 5

western and northern portions of the site. Development of plans for the vegetative restoration of wetlands and associated habitats surrounding Fish Lake, which is currently dominated by near monotypes of invasive Reed Canary Grass and Hybrid Cattail.

Future project planning will include consideration of features to provide access into and through restored natural areas and stormwater treatment practices as appropriate. Conversion to native plant communities will consider long-term management strategies to support resilience and sustainability through periodic, but regular maintenance practices.

Mr. Kinney noted that public engagement included resident letters and an open house.

A discussion took place regarding buckthorn removal which includes bringing in goats to eat the buckthorn re sprouts.

Mr. Kinney noted that stormwater areas could be added to clean water before it gets to Powers Lake and there is a trail opportunity which could connect to the trail south of Powers Lake.

Ms. Okada noted that this project is multi-phased and no formal approval is required at this time as there will be more public engagement going forward and a concept plan will be brought back to the PNRC at some future date. The project is through the South Washington County Watershed District and no city funds are being expended on this portion of the project.

There was consensus among the Commission to move the Hasenbank Woods and Fish Lake Vegetation Management plan forward.

F. Community Gardens – Memorandum No. 22 – 07

Mr. Smidt noted the city had been contacted by Woodbury Thrives about adding a community garden. Once the project was moved forward, staff reached out to resident master gardeners for input and feedback on a pilot project. Andy's Bark Park was chosen as the ideal location for the pilot project. At the park there is access to well water, availability of onsite parking and room for future expansion should the pilot program be successful. Mr. Smidt noted; however, that there may be limitations to future expansion due to the current water source being a well.

It was noted that Woodbury Thrives has applied for a \$5,000 Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) healthy eating grant, which if granted, would cover additional equipment, and supplies for the pilot program.

Mr. Smidt noted that the pilot program will consist of 16 garden plots, each 8-x 12-foot. The plot size was determined as a manageable size for individual gardens. Once the pilot program is advertised, Woodbury residents will have the opportunity to register for a single plot, online, first come, first served, for a yearly fee of \$25. It was also noted that local organizations may be interested in renting a garden plot as well, and that there may be training opportunities at the site for participants through the Washington County Master Gardener's program.

Mr. Smidt was asked if vandalism is a concern. Mr. Smidt noted he could reach out to other community gardens to see if they have experienced vandalism; however, the subject of vandalism was not brought up initially. It was also noted that fencing the garden area, to keep deer out, would probably be a good idea.

The Commissioners were in favor of and excited about the pilot program.

G. Monthly Update – Memorandum No. 22 – 08

Ms. Okada noted that the 2022 Woodbury winter medallion hunt “Coin Quest,” was once again a huge success.

Ms. Okada noted that staff will be working in the next couple of weeks on the rebranding of the HealthEast Sports Center.

Council Report – Councilmember Santini

Councilmember Santini thanked the Commission for their discussion surrounding the environmental stewardship presentation at the meeting and that she is looking forward to future discussion prior to the Council’s June strategic planning workshop.

Announcements/Miscellaneous

A discussion took place with regard to Commissioners receiving calls from residents, in particular, reports of downed trees on city property. Ms. Okada noted that staff is available to receive calls and obtain follow-up information, especially if there is a safety concern close to an active park space, in order to complete work orders that are then provided to the Parks and Forestry Division.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Belinda Reed

Belinda Reed
Administrative Assistant

Approved by the Parks and Natural Resources Commission on March 1, 2022.