

**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, May 3, 2022**

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

Commission Member(s) Absent: None

Commission Member Virtual: None

Councilmember In-person: Councilmember Kim Wilson

Staff Present: Michelle Okada, Parks and Recreation Director
Jennifer McLoughlin, Sr. Environmental Resources Coordinator
Belinda Reed, Recording Secretary
Kristin Seaman, Environmental Resources Coordinator

Staff Virtual: Sarah Alig, Senior Management Analyst
Jodi Sauro, Parks and Recreation Coordinator

Call to Order

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

Open Forum

Members of the public were in attendance in-person and virtually.

Joe Ward, 7817 Somerset Circle, Woodbury, Minnesota 55125. Mr. Ward thanked staff member, Sarah Alig, for work product presented during past Parks and Natural Resources Commission meetings.

Action Items

A. April 5, 2022, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Meeting Minutes

Chair Bjerckness asked for the approval of the Minutes of the April 5, 2022, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Commission.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Nelson, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery, to approve the April 5, 2022, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Minutes.

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Vote: In favor All present
 Against None
 Absent None

B. NPDES Annual Report – Memorandum No. 22 – 12

Environmental Resources Coordinator, Kristin Seaman, provided an overview of the city’s stormwater, water quality and water initiative and efficiency programs noting that the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Program (NPDES) updated permit, which is a five-year Federal permit to municipalities who operate a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4), handed down by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), was redrafted in 2020, with new rules and recordkeeping requirements. The main component of the permit is the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Ms. Seaman noted the City of Woodbury is up-to-date on the current permit.

Ms. Seaman highlighted the actions for the SWPPP, which includes six components: public education, public participation, illicit discharge, construction site stormwater, stormwater design standards and municipal operations; the latter which was described as a big catch all.

Ms. Seaman, shared specific projects staff have worked on throughout the past year as they relate to what is referred to as “One Water Update,” which includes stormwater and groundwater, viewed as one because they are highly connected and managed together.

Ms. Seaman reviewed the Vegetation Management annual program that has been operated the last five years and highlighted a few projects, including the Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) grants the city received for Valley Creek Park, as well as a grant for the City Hall wetland and Marsh Creek/Savanna Oaks. Ms. Okada noted that one of the priorities of the Valley Creek Park project was natural resource preservation and the city was able to save dollars in the project because of this grant.

A discussion took place with regard to the vegetation work for Valley Creek Park. With the current grant funding, the city was able to manage the first three years of recommendations. With regard to addressing the tree plantations in year 4 or 5, staff could look to apply for additional grant funding or budgeting, in order to thin the trees and provide the space needed to maintain the healthier trees.

With regard to how the city prioritizes which stormwater areas are going to be revitalized, Ms. Seaman noted that in 2018, staff completed a larger study of stormwater basins on public land, private land and/or in an easement and identified areas with the biggest public benefit.

Ms. Seaman highlighted the city’s water efficiency incentive programs, including the commercial and homeowner association (HOA) irrigation cost share program, as well as the residential irrigation controller program. To date, approximately 3,100 WaterSense, Wi-Fi based controllers have been purchased.

Ms. Seaman noted that the toilet replacement pilot program, implemented in two phases at Valley Creek Apartments, will result in the total unit replaced of 350 units by the end of 2022. This program was funded by a grant from the Metropolitan Council through the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Fund.

C. Environmental Stewardship Statement of Urgency – Memorandum No. 22 – 13

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Ms. Okada noted that in addition to the environmental stewardship discussions having taken place over the last three PNRC meetings, in 2021, there were the educational sessions including the Great Plains Institute presentation in October of 2021. Ms. Okada also noted that the draft statement being presented for discussion at the meeting, was prepared using the content from the previous discussions among the commissioners and once finalized and approved by commission consensus, would then go to the City Council for their review.

Ms. Alig asked the commission for their thoughts on the draft statement.

Commission comments included commending staff on the work; that the work represents a good culmination of discussions; that it would be hard to improve upon, shows urgency and captures the groups' concerns and was seen as very logical and compelling.

There was consensus with the two-part recommendation to the Environmental Stewardship Strategic Initiative in the letter.

Concerns were expressed regarding the commission's desire to have ownership and take action and whether or not references to a climate action plan is more generic and may result in narrowing the guidance provided to a consultant. It was suggested that to avoid narrowing the scope unnecessarily, a consultant could be provided a list of goals from which to lay out an action plan for the city to follow.

Looking at the overarching umbrella: groundwater, surface water flooding, preserving natural resources, air quality issues, strategic initiative for environmental stewardship is very broad and more than just a climate action plan. A discussion took place as to whether "Climate Action Plan" feels like partisan, political language. It was suggested that the word "climate" be removed and the word "Action" remain when referring to the plan.

Other suggestions made included "Resiliency Plan" or "Environmental Stewardship Plan." It was noted that a "resilience" against potential climate related impacts, is language used in the most recent Comprehensive Plan, which may speak to the Council and the community members during community engagement, and also that during PNRC previous conversations, "urgency" was mentioned regarding the environment.

The commission, by consensus, decided to remove the word "climate" and keep the word "action" when referring to the plan throughout the letter.

When asked about the commission's role in the next couple of years, Ms. Okada noted that if the City Council adopts Environmental Stewardship as a 2023-2025 Strategic Initiative, with desired specific outcomes, the commission could help guide that work with a robust community engagement process in a way similar as to how the Parks and Trails Replacement Plan was conducted.

There was consensus that the statement, as revised, best describes the commission's sense of urgency, regarding the future of Environmental Stewardship in Woodbury.

Chair Bjerckness asked for the approval of the Parks and Natural Resources Commission Environmental Stewardship Statement of Urgency, with changes that were discussed and reflected on the screen by staff, as the commission's recommendation to the City Council for their consideration as a Strategic Initiative.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Wadd, seconded by Commissioner

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Brewington, to approve the Parks and Natural Resources Commission Environmental Stewardship Statement of Urgency, with changes that were discussed and reflected on the screen by staff, as the commission's recommendation to the City Council for their consideration as a Strategic Initiative

Vote: In favor All present
 Against None
 Absent None

Ms. Alig noted that the PNRC's letter would be presented by Chair Bjerckness to the City Council at the Council's May 25 meeting, as a discussion item.

D. Park Ordinance Discussion – Memorandum No. 22 – 14

Ms. Okada noted that staff has begun reviewing Chapter 16 – Parks and Recreation ordinances of the Woodbury City Code. While this is a multi-step process, commissioners were asked to provide feedback and discussion on the proposed changes to the Parks and Recreation ordinances.

Upon the completion of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in 2021, and trends and progress in meeting the city's bicycle and pedestrian goals, the City Council continues to encourage staff to look at city ordinances.

It was also noted that in August 2021, the state statute on electric-assisted bicycles changed.

Starting with a look at definitions, Mr. Smidt was asked to outline the three different electric-assisted bicycle classifications as defined in state statute.

Class 1 - Electric-assisted bicycle with a motor that provides assistance when you are manually peddling and can only go up to 20 mph.

Class 2 - Electric-assisted bicycle with or without peddle assist, but with a throttle that will only reach 20 mph.

Class 3 - Electric-assisted bicycle with a motor that provides peddle assistance and can reach 28 mph.

A discussion ensued with regard to trail speed and safety in general. It was noted that current trail speed is 20 mph per state statute. Concerns raised included the ability to control an electric-assisted bicycle when speeding up and stopping, passing pedestrians too quickly on trails, somebody biking and not paying attention. With trails near playgrounds, there were concerns with injuries that could possibly occur if a child would encounter an electric-assisted bicycle. It was also noted that pedestrians have had experiences with golf carts running up and down trails. A concern was raised about operating an electric-assisted bicycle under the influence of alcohol.

Ms. Okada will obtain information from Public Safety with regard to whether it is unlawful to be under the influence while riding an electric-assisted bike.

The group discussed the benefits of allowing Class 1 and Class 2 electric-assisted bicycles on city paved trails including the ability to navigate the trails for errands such as getting groceries, along with the added benefits of mobility for certain members of the public in navigating more hilly areas while enjoying the benefit of exercise. It was noted that ultimately it comes down to the operator of

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any recreation bike or vehicle, to make sure they are controlling their speed and aware of their surroundings while operating a manual or an electric-assisted bicycle.

Staff noted that a number of cities are addressing electric-assisted bicycles following the change in state statute, including a number specifically referencing the state statute.

The question was raised to consider including Class 3 electric-assisted bicycles. Ms. Okada noted that Class 3 electric-assisted bicycles are not allowed by state statute.

It was noted that the ordinance covers city paved trails and off-road trails.

Ms. Okada asked if there was a consensus to include ebikes with the definitions to stay with and be consistent with state statute.

There was consensus, to stay consistent with state statute and define "Bicycle" and Electric-assisted Bicycle" as defined by MN State Statute which would include allowing Class 1 and Class 2 ebikes in our trail system.

Next meeting staff will present the PNRC with a definition that has been changed to reflect the suggestions from PNRC.

16-44 – Motorized Recreational Vehicles.

Ms. Okada noted that motorized recreational vehicles as defined have no human propulsion required with examples such as motorcycles, snowmobiles, electric scooters and mopeds. If non-licensed electric scooters or segways are allowed, it would be necessary to look at how to differentiate non-licensed items such as riding lawnmowers and ebikes. However, if ebikes are defined then we would not have to include them here as it relates to public park and open space. It was noted that park trails along roadways such as Valley Creek and sidewalks would be a future item to be looked at.

Medical assistance devices are governed by separate state statute, powered wheelchairs etc., are not what we are discussing, we cannot further govern those.

Many additional questions and considerations were deliberated; diversity in mobility, wide range of vehicles to be considered, age restrictions may vary by vehicle, noise in the parks from these vehicles, trail user conflicts, current state statute lists 20 mph as speed limit - city may be more but not less restrictive, rental services - do we allow them in the parks. Opportunity to evaluate internal park trails versus roadside trails.

Ms. Okada requested a show of where the commissioners stood on the consideration for this topic. Responses were mixed; from allow them, need more information, to not allow them. Staff said they will continue to research this and come back with more information at a future meeting.

16-40 Hours and access. Director or their designee authority to temporarily closed parks or sections of parks to the public for a variety of reasons including projects, blue-green algae, etc.

This would provide consistency with the opening the park outside of hours for public needs. When asked, Commissioners did not have concern with this change.

16-59 – Staff is recommending permanently prohibiting alcohol at Carver Lake Park with the exception of those who rent the facility. Public Safety supports this and have communicated that it

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has helped to curbe some of the problems experienced in the park. Additionally, the parks maintenance staff has noticed a reduction in trash, particularly beer cans around the beach area.

Like Carver Lake Park, Menomoni Park is a somewhat hidden park area, next to a lake, not allowing alcohol at this park has been in ordinance for many years.

Discussion centered on situations at the park that are prompting this adjustment. Staff shared reasoning includes excess beer/alcohol trash around the park, underage drinking, creating a healthy environment for all park users, two unfortunate drownings in recent years, alcohol/drinking was present at the beach during the time of one of the incidents.

There was a discussion about data supporting this recommendation. Ms. Okada said she will request the data, and added that some of the observations from recreation, parks maintenance and Public Safety staff are not documented in police reports. Additionally, other measures such as increased patrols to aid in the curbing of the negative behaviors has been helpful. Ms. Okada summarized the discussion with Public Safety leadership and their support of the ordinance change.

With the wide-open nature of Carver Lake Park, it is difficult to prohibit alcohol only at the beach.

Other suggested ordinance changes are related to the name change at M Health Fairview Sports Center.

Ms. Okada thanked the PNRC for the robust discussion.

E. Parks & Recreation Department 2021 Annual Report – Memorandum No. 22 - 15

Ms. Okada noted that the department's annual report documents the year in review, highlighting key items and statistics for each division within the department.

Ms. Okada inquired if the commission would like to see any additional information addressed in the yearly annual report and welcomed feedback on the current report.

A brief discussion ensued with most noting they liked the report and describing the report as user-friendly with easy-to-read graphics, and thanked staff for the great recreation offerings and high standards set.

F. Monthly Update – Memorandum No. 22 – 16

Ms. Okada noted that the Council was provided the Angel of Hope memo the previous week and that the Angel of Hope group is looking to start publicly fundraising for the monument.

Council Report – Councilmember Wilson

Councilmember Wilson mentioned events that were coming up in May, including: the Woodbury Business Celebration, to be held at Central Park on Thursday, May 5, at 7:30 a.m.; City Council meeting Wednesday, May 11, at 7 p.m.; New Resident welcoming event Tuesday, May 17, at M Health Fairview Sports Center starting at 5 p.m.; Council workshop on Wednesday, May 18, 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 25 Council meeting at 7 p.m.; and Memorial Day Ceremony on Monday, May 30, 11 a.m. at the Veterans' Memorial located next to City Hall.

Announcements/Miscellaneous

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Ms. Okada noted that Central Park has been added to the post Council workshop on May 11. This will be a mid-stream schematic plan touch point, scoping of design with no cost estimates at this point, with the Council.

Ms. Okada noted that there may not be a PNRC meeting in July.

It was noted that staff will be looking to schedule park visits with the PNRC in August and/or September. It was noted that the buckthorn control, with the use of goats, at the Hasenbank Woods, located off of St. Johns Drive, going north off of Valley Creek Road, is being organized. The woods are located on the right-hand side of St. Johns Drive.

Mr. Smidt noted that Wednesday, June 1, there will be a 10-year celebration of the Miracle League at the Miracle League Field, located at the M Health Fairview Sports Center, from 5-8 p.m. PNRC was invited to attend. It was noted that parking will be available by East Ridge High School and the sports center. Mr. Smidt noted that Miracle League games take place Monday and Wednesday evenings, throughout the summer months, with over 100 participants in the league.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Belinda Reed

Belinda Reed
Administrative Assistant

Approved by the Parks and Natural Resources Commission on June 7, 2022.