

**Meeting Minutes
New Prague Park Board
Tuesday, October 12, 2021
6:00 PM**

1. Call Meeting to Order

The regular meeting was called to order at City Hall at 6:00 PM by Chair Joe Barten. Members present were Joe Barten, Brian Molitor, Maggie Bass, and Al Hansen. Absent was Youth Representative Hailey Calliguri. Staff present was Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director.

2. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Molitor, to approve the September 14th, 2021 regular meeting minutes. Motion carried (4-0).

3. Review Financial Reports

Planning Director Ondich presented the financial reports to the Park Board noting that during the month of September, an additional \$906.76 was added to the Park Equipment Fund from new residential home permits and commercial permits. He also noted that there were 2 new home permits issued in September for a total of 25 housing unit permits issued so far in 2021.

A motion was made by Bass, seconded by Hansen to accept the financial reports as presented. Motion carried (4-0).

4. Splash Pad Discussion

Planning Director Ondich stated that since last month's meeting, staff met with Sarah Kallal and Stephanie Labelle who are involved in organizing the efforts towards construction of a splash pad. He stated that as the park board will recall, at the August Park Board Meeting, the Park Board noted they were interested in discussing the idea of a splash pad further as long as a local group were to become organized and that the Park Board may consider helping fund a feasibility study for the splash pad to be located on the former outdoor pool site. He stated that staff has contacted USAquatics for a proposal to complete a feasibility study for a splash pad at the former outdoor pool location, but at this time does not have the proposal in hand but that he would also obtain another proposal from another company. He reminded the Park Board that a splash pad is on the long-term list of projects for the Park Board.

Stephanie LaBelle introduced herself to the Park Board and indicated that she lives directly across the street to the east of the former outdoor pool and stated that she believes that there needs to be an outdoor water feature in this community.

Sarah Kallal introduced herself to the Park Board and indicated that while she has only lived in the community for three years that her husband grew up in New Prague. She stated that she believes there needs to be an outdoor water feature to get kids outdoors in the summer. She

stated that she is committed to fundraising for the project and believes a splash pad will better the community.

Maggie Bass stated that the City Council has discussed demolition of the outdoor pool and that knowing what could be done with the site would help inform the process of demolition if there is anything that could be re-used. She stated that she believes a splash pad could be a complement to the indoor pool.

Chair Barten thanks Ms. LaBelle and Ms. Kallal for attending the meeting and noted that he has a three-year-old and they go to the splash pad in Jordan. He stated that he likes the former outdoor pool location but doesn't want to rule out any sites for the feasibility study stage and believes that the Park Board and City need to have a role in the design and construction of a splash pad.

Al Hansen stated that he likes the central location of the former outdoor pool.

Chair Barten would like the feasibility study proposals to include looking at the splash pad at differing levels as well as whether they be gated and fee based versus open and free to the public.

Brian Molitor stated that there is nothing for the 12-18 age group in the community and hopes there is a way to incorporate features for that group.

Ms. LaBelle and Ms. Kallal indicated they had thought about concessions, mini-golf and maybe even a dual-purpose batting cage at the site.

Maggie Bass indicated that she is very interested in the idea of a multi-featured site.

Chair Barten indicated that there is a Ninja Warrior type park in Jordan that is good for older kids as well as workout machines that are good for older age groups to consider.

The Park Board thanked Ms. LaBelle and Ms. Kallal for their initiative and interest in the splash pad idea.

5. Memorial Park History Shed

Planning Director Ondich stated that over the past few years there have been great improvements made by the City and New Prague Area Historical Society at the Centennial Cabin in Memorial Park including the restoration of the cabin itself along with the construction of the "history shed". He stated that the original cabin and the history shed are city buildings, but the contents are owned and managed by the historical society. He stated that Dennis Dvorak, in consultation with the New Prague Area Historical society is now looking for approval to construct another storage shed next to the existing history shed, to house additional items when not on display. He stated that at this time, they are seeking permission to construct a shed of approximately 12' x 14' in size and that they have lined up donations for the removal of an existing tree, site development and installation of the cement for the placement of the shed so there would not be any cost to the city for this first phase of work. He stated that they plan to get the site preparations completed and the concrete installed yet this fall while weather allows it and that they would not construct the actual shed

until the spring of 2022. He added that they are seeking a matching amount of \$3,504 from the Park Board for the shed's construction but noted that while money from the Park Equipment Fund could be used as a contribution towards the shed, there are many projects which have been and continue to remain on the Park Board's project list that compete for these funds including numerous trail and sidewalk connection projects.

Mr. Dennis Dvorak thanked the Park Board and Parks Maintenance Supervisor Jim Calliguri for keeping the parks in good order, including the site in Memorial Park. He stated that they need the storage building to store items that they need to move each time they give tours currently. He stated that they have the donations for phase one to be completed yet this fall, but would continue to fundraise for the actual shed structure over the winter.

A motion was made by Bass, seconded by Molitor, to recommend that the City Council approve the construction of a storage shed in Memorial Park by the New Prague Area Historical Society at a size of 12' x 14' just east of the existing history shed and with no financial contribution towards the construction of the storage shed at this time. Motion carried (4-0).

6. Central Plaza Update

Planning Director Ondich stated that the Central Plaza Committee met on September 27th, 2021 and continued to revise the concept plan in preparation for presentation to the City Council on October 18th, 2021. He stated that he included the most recent plan revisions as information for the Park Board and welcomed the Park Board to attend or watch the Park Board meeting on October 18th to see the final design and presentation.

7. Memorial Bench Donation

Planning Director Ondich stated that earlier this summer, local resident Joy Seema had contacted former City Administrator Mike Johnson about donating a memorial bench to the City for her late husband Paul Seema who was a DEA Agent (who died in the line of duty in 1988 – you can reach more here: <https://survivorsbenefitfund.org/paul-s-seema/>). After Mr. Johnson's retirement, he stated that he continued discussions with Mrs. Joy Seema who indicated that she could provide for a donated bench from the DEA Survivors Benefit Fund at no cost to the City. He stated that the bench would be a polished solid black granite bench (similar to what is shown below and is 4' long). He stated that more recently he has been working directly with David Jacobson of the DEA Survivors Benefit Fund who has indicated that they have worked with cities across the country to install these benches which are very durable and require essentially no maintenance.

A motion was made by Hansen, seconded by Molitor, to accept the memorial bench from Mrs. Seema to be placed in front of the Memorial Library. Motion carried (4-0).

8. Dog Park Survey Results

Planning Director Ondich stated that the dog park survey was opened on June 9th and closed on September 30th with a total of 492 responses received (which is just over 15% of the total number of housing units in the City per the 2020 census (3,191), however

survey respondents were not required to be City residents to fill out the survey. He summarized the survey results as follows:

- Nearly 90% of survey respondents indicated they were city residents.
- Over 82% of respondents indicated having either one or two dogs (over 400 responses – while the City issued only 129 dog licenses in 2020). 8.5% had no dogs.
- Dog parks visited by respondents include Lonsdale, Jordan, Cleary Lake, Lakeville, Northfield, Belle Plaine, Burnsville, Mankato as the top responses.
- Over 90% indicated support for a dog park (at either Sliding Hill Skate Park or Southside Park as the top locations) with 9.1% not supporting a dog park at all.
- Nearly 70% of respondents did not support a daily pay option.
- Nearly 50% of those willing to pay annually to use the dog park said they would pay an additional \$5 per dog, nearly 30% willing to pay an additional \$10, and just over 20% willing to pay an additional \$15 (licenses are \$10 per year currently).
- The most important features for a dog park were that it be (in this order): clean/maintained, safe, water feature, large/small dog areas, shade, seating.
- Over 46% of respondents indicated that they would not have any concerns about having a dog park in the City. Over 20% indicated they were concerned about safety, and over 16% indicated concerns about animal vaccinations.
- 63 respondents provided their e-mail and noted an interest in donating funds or volunteering in some capacity.
- There were 142 written comments about dog parks which is difficult to summarize but I have included all the responses in the packet along with charts of the above responses.

The Park Board accepted the information and asked staff to contact those that provided contact information with the summary of the survey and to encourage them to organize in order to provide a ground swell of support for a dog park through fundraising and other methods to build support for the project, possibly through a phased approach for development.

9. Lighting at Heritage Park

Planning Director Ondich stated that Maggie Bass was contacted by a resident inquiring about the possibility of adding lights at Heritage Park, specifically for the basketball court area where the resident has seen users aim their vehicle headlights towards the court area when playing there in the evening, particularly in the fall when it is dark earlier in the evening. He stated that the resident also believed additional lights would help with visibility in the area and drivers ignoring stop signs. He stated that he discussed the idea with Bruce Reimers, Utilities General Manager, and it was noted that there is not any electric infrastructure in that segment of Lexington Ave. N., which is also why there is not any electric at the picnic shelter. He stated that they are looking into the possibility of adding electric to the park along with the potential for another streetlight.

Brian Molitor stated that he believes it's essential to have lights for the court and that it's a good activity for older kids.

The consensus of the Park Board was to obtain cost estimates from the utility department and to put the addition of lights at the court area and electricity to the picnic shelter on a future year's project list.

10. Miscellaneous

- a. **2022-2026 Project Plan** – Planning Director Ondich stated that the old bathroom at Memorial Park was demolished this week and that the installation of a drinking fountain in Southside Park by the picnic shelter could be delayed depending on the utility department's workload this fall.
- b. **Park Board Budget Discussion Update** – Planning Director Ondich stated that he included the ranked project listing as information and that the Council's next budget meeting would be held on October 25, 2021.
- c. **Fitness and Aquatic Center Update** – Planning Director Ondich stated that the FAC update was included in the packet as information.
- d. **Tobacco Free Parks Policy – Update** – Planning Director Ondich stated that at the City Council Meeting on October 4, 2021, the Tobacco Free Parks Policy was given a public hearing in which one public comment was received from a representative from ANSR (Association of Non-Smokers Minnesota) to go along with their letter supporting the policy. He stated that no other public comments were received at the hearing but that ultimately, the policy was not approved by a vote of 1-3 and voting against were Jirik, Ryan, Seiler with Wolf absent.
- e. **Greenway Park Petroleum Issue Update** – Planning Director Ondich stated that the Park Board requested an update on the petroleum leak from the Holiday Gas Station into Greenway Park at last month's meeting and that Public Works Director Matt Rynda indicated that the pipe from the Holiday Gas Station to the creek was removed where the discharge of petroleum was occurring and that bio rolls were left in the

creek to help determine if there were other leak areas, and finding none, the bio rolls were removed in September. He reiterated that this was an issue between MPCA and Holiday to address, not the City.

- f. **Park Vandalism Update** – Planning Director Ondich stated that the City Parks have received a lot of vandalism, particularly from September 20th through early October. He stated that much of the vandalism is connected to “social media challenges” on TikTok, specifically vandalizing bathrooms. He stated that while some cameras were put up at parks, the bathrooms at all city parks had to be closed the week of September 27th due to the continued vandalism and instead portable bathrooms were placed at the parks. He stated that subsequently, those bathrooms were also vandalized with the hand sanitizers being the focus of the vandalism but that the Police Department continues to monitor the situation with some video monitoring and as of last week had caught at least one vandal.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 PM by order of Chair Barten.

Respectfully Submitted,



Ken Ondich
Planning / Community Development Director