

**Meeting Minutes
New Prague Park Board
Tuesday, May 14th, 2024
6:00 PM**

1. Annual Tour

The Park Board conducted a tour of the following parks from 5:00PM to 6:00PM: Memorial Park, Northside Park, City Center. In attendance were Maggie Bass, Chair Joe Barten and Christine Wolf, Planning Director Ondich and Planner Chapman.

2. Call Meeting to Order

The regular meeting was called to order at City Hall at 6:04 PM by Chair Joe Barten. Members present were Joe Barten, Christine Wolf, Matt Becka, Jessica Dohm, and Maggie Bass. Absent was Al Hansen. Staff present were Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director and Kyra Chapman – Planner.

**3. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2024 Regular Meeting**

Wolf noticed there was an error on the previous minutes. On the 5th page of the Park Board minutes, it stated that the Park Board made a motion to allocate \$15,00 for the establishment period and maintenance for up to 3 years after the Settlers Park Prairie Restoration Project. The minutes should instead say \$15,000.

A motion was made by Barten seconded by Becka, to approve the April 9, 2024, regular meeting minutes. Motion carried (5-0).

4. Review Financial Reports

Planning Director Ondich presented the April financial report. No new residential home permits have been issued. The accounting error was corrected for this month's financial. The \$7,672.89 for the April Park Equipment Funds received is now shown on the financial. The \$5,000 that the Park Board agreed to contribute to the POPS site feasibility study will be given to POPS when it's confirmed that the facility will be located on a City property. Similarly, there is still the \$15,000 the Park Board agreed to allocate to the POPS City Center/Central Park Small Area Plan once it's conditioned to be located on public property/city park.

Becka inquired if the City typically sees more new home permits during this time of year.

Planning Director Ondich explained that that the City would typically receive several new home permits during this time of the year. So far, there have been a total of two new home permits issued in 2024. The City has about 35 lots available but not all of them are available. Many of the remaining vacant lots are not walkouts and not as desirable. The

proposed 54-unit apartment building that would be built south of Walgreens had their application for state funding approved by City Council. City Council has also agreed to do tax abatement. The developer intends to break ground in October.

Wolf asked how many picnic tables were purchased for \$10,000.

Planning Director Ondich stated that between 6 and 10 were purchased. Shipping costs have risen recently.

Barten recommended that the City could use their funds to repair old picnic tables rather than purchasing completely new ones. Perhaps the City could prioritize places that need improvement like the picnic tables in Northside Park.

A motion was made by Becka, seconded by Wolf, to approve the financial reports. Motion carried (5-0).

5. Tree Giveaway/Arbor Day Celebration

Planner Chapman explained that the Tree Giveaway event occurred on April 27th from 10am to 12pm at Memorial Park Pavilion. There was a total of 47 trees provided, ranging from 3'-4' tall. There were 12 red oaks, 25 common hackberries, and 10 American plums. Many residents liked the fact that the trees were larger than last year. The red oaks were especially popular among residents. The red oaks were all preordered within 24 hours. The City could offer the tree giveaway event again, however, if the City wanted to offer 3'-4' tall trees again, the City would have to contact SWCD by July to reserve the trees. To maintain the City's status as a Tree City USA, New Prague must continue to celebrate Arbor Day whether that's through another tree giveaway or a different celebration.

Barten suggested that there could be an Arborist to answer any questions residents may have regarding trees.

Barten inquired how expensive the trees were.

Planner Chapman explained that the trees were sold as bundles, however, they were usually under \$3 per tree.

Barten proposed that 100 trees could be offered if there's a demand. More oaks could be offered since they were so popular.

Dohm inquired if residents were willing to pay and wanted more trees if they could order more than the giveaway would allow.

Planner Chapman explained that the resident could order directly from SWCD. The city cannot directly sell the trees because the city would need a license for selling trees.

6. Discussion of Memorial Bench and Tree Program

Planning Director Ondich explained that a program participant of the memorial bench and tree program voiced concerns with staff about the information in the flyer and the fee schedule. The flyer and the fee schedule show that the costs are much lower than they actually are. On the website and the flyer it states that “fees are estimates and may vary due to material surcharges, taxes and shipping costs”. Staff will likely change the website and flyer to include higher cost estimates such as saying that the benches may cost between \$1,500-\$2,000. Additionally, the participant asked if the city would allow a “backless” bench to save money. There is no formal written policy on the benches but the Park Board changed the flyer a few years ago to only allow 6’ coated metal benches for consistency and durability purposes. To maintain a consistent appearance with the rest of the other benches in the program, staff recommends using benches with backs.

Bass suggested that the brochure and flyer could omit actual dollar amount so there are no discrepancies.

Dohm recommended that a price range could be provided. Furthermore, the website and brochure could state that prices may vary and may increase.

Barten thought it would be beneficial to include an upfront price range to give participants an idea of how much the bench or trees may cost. Without a price estimate, participants may be too shocked by the costs. On the website and flyer, there could be language that says “estimates may vary”, which could also be bolded. The City shouldn’t allow backless benches because it would be good to maintain consistency in the parks.

7. Miscellaneous

- a. **Basketball Court at Memorial Park** –Planning Director Ondich presented an email from Liam O’Gara, a middle school student, who stated his interest in having a basketball court or basketball hoop at Memorial Park. The student believed that it would encourage people to go outside.

Barten stated that the basketball court or hoop could be considered but as well as other uses needed. A basketball court hasn’t been identified in the plans in the past but the City can consider it for the future.

- b. **Creek Clean Up**– Planner Chapman explained that the 2024 Creek Clean Up occurred on Saturday, April 20th from 9:00am-11:00am. There were at least 15 volunteers present. Due to the number of volunteers, the group was split into two. One group started near Tracker Management across from ASI and made their way north to Philipp’s Park. Another group started at Yackly Cabin and ended near the Middle School Tennis Courts. During the event, volunteers filled up a dumpster’s worth of garbage.

Becka stated that an area that needed extra attention was Philipp's Park. There surprisingly wasn't as much trash along the railroad. He showed more interest in doing more of a creek clean up rather than just cleaning people's private property. It would be interesting to do Greenway Park as well as Philipp's Park.

Planner Chapman suggested that she could start discussions on the Creek Clean Up again in December or January. That will give the Park Board time to decide and plan for 2025 Creek Clean Up event.

Barten commented that there could be a three year plan for notifying all the adopt a park participants for a spring clean up. It would be an opportunity for adopt a park participants to pick up trash, and rake up mulch near the play areas. There could be two city trucks to haul away the trash.

Becka suggested that the cleaning events could be a requirement for adopt a park participants.

- c. **Disc Golf Course Update** – Planner Chapman stated that staff has purchased some vegetation and a standard disc golf basket. Staff will continue to purchase more supplies. Next week, Planner Chapman and Park Maintenance Supervisor Calliguri will stake the locations of the tee pads and the disc golf baskets. Staking the locations will help create the disc golf course map that will be posted at the park entrance. The grant contract requires that all work must be completed by August 14th, 2024.

Becka inquired if he could join staff when they're staking the locations.

Planner Chapman said she will determine a date and send an email invitation.

- d. **Traffic Speeds Near the Dog Park** – Planner Chapman stated that she posted a traffic counter north of 12th St NE near the anticipated dog park to calculate vehicle speeds. The traffic study was conducted from May 1st to May 8th. The posted speed limit east of the intersection of Columbus and 12th St NE is 55 mph and to the west is 30 mph. During the traffic study, the average daily traffic was 1525 vehicles. For a 0-mph tolerance above the 55mph speed limit, 25% of vehicles were speeding in lane 1 (heading west) and 27% of vehicles were speeding in lane 2 (heading east). For a tolerance of 5-mph above the 55 mph speed limit, 6% of vehicles were speeding in lane 1 and 7% of vehicles were speeding in lane 2. The combined 85th percentile for the study was 57.9. The average speed was 48 mph.

Planning Director Ondich stated that the City could take the road from the County to reduce the speeds.

Bass was concerned about the speeds because there is walking trail and residential homes adjacent to the road.

Barten asked if speed bumps could be used.

Planning Director Ondich replied that he did not know Scott County's policies but staff could look into that. Speeding along 12th St NE is higher than expected. Staff will notify the Police Department to do more patrolling along 12th St NE.

- e. **Settlers Park Prairie Restoration Update** – Planner Chapman explained that the City Council approved the selection of Rock Leaf Water Environmental to complete the Settlers Park Prairie and Wetland Restoration project. The firm was selected because they followed the RFP guidelines, had good references, and had the lowest budget request. Staff will have their first kick-off meeting with them on Monday, May 20th.

Barten asked if the Park Board agrees to allocate the \$15,000 for the 3-year maintenance plan after the grant timeline is complete, if it would have to be approved by City Council.

Planning Director Ondich said that City Council has to approve this before a 3-year contract could be made.

- f. **Comprehensive Plan Update / Small Area Plan Update** – Planner Director Ondich explained that the public open house meeting for the Small Area Plan took place at the Broz Hotel on May 8th. Two concept drawings of the site were presented: the In-Town Living and the Civic Commons. Both concepts showed the stormwater pond, housing, and the POPs facility. There was great input from the public, many of whom were residents adjacent to the Small Area Site. Many residents liked the senior cottages since they looked like more single-family homes that are common in the neighborhood. The city is more interested in having more dense housing to provide more vibrancy to the city. There were concerns about noise and parking. Staff intend to schedule another Steering Committee meeting by the end of May. If the Park Board has any comments or suggestions, they should contact staff who will send their feedback to MSA.
- g. **Concerned Resident Letter Regarding Trees In Memorial Park** – Planning Director Ondich presented Mary Frost's letter regarding the ash trees that were removed in Memorial Park. In the letter, Mrs. Frost wanted the ash trees to be treated rather than removed. The City did apply for funding to treat some ash trees and oak trees in Memorial Park but was not selected. Any treatment for the trees would need to be included in the 2025 budget request. Last fall, Jerry Flicek, an arborist, projected that it would cost approximately \$32,000-\$34,000 to treat the 85 oak trees in Memorial Park with an insecticide (for possible twolined chestnut borer) and 35 of those same oak with fungicide (for possible bur oak blight).

Dohm stated that the removed ash trees was alarming and shocking.

Becka wondered if it's worth the time and effort to treat the trees if there's a possibility treatment won't work. It may not be sustainable long term.

Barten wondered if it would be worthwhile to prioritize certain urban forest areas. The City could prioritize certain areas with high value trees or have some system of prioritization. Perhaps the Tree Inventory Study that Bolton and Menk completed could be beneficial for this.

Wolf thought that even if the city treated the ash trees, they may only survive for a short period of time. It seemed inevitable that the ash trees would die.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 PM by order of Chair Barten.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kyra J. Chapman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kyra J. Chapman
Planner