

**Meeting Minutes  
New Prague Park Board  
Tuesday, July 9th, 2024  
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, Matt Becka, Christine Wolf, Jessica Dohm, Shannon Sticha, and Youth Representative Jacob Bisek. Absent were Maggie Bass and Debra Tharaldson. Staff present were Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director and Kyra Chapman – Planner.

**2. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes  
June 11, 2024 Regular Meeting**

Dohm requested that the minutes should have included the discussion on the orientation of the POPS stage since it was an important talking point. Dohm had gone out to the site after the previous Park Board meeting and noticed that the proposed orientation of the stage would cause the audience to look directly into the sun.

A motion was made by Dohm, seconded by Wolf, to amend the June 11, 2024, regular meeting minutes with the discussion of the POPS stage orientation. Motion carried (5-0).

**3. Review Financial Reports**

Planning Director Ondich presented the June financial report. In the month of June, \$854.62 in funds were added to the Park Equipment Fund from new residential home permits and commercial permits. There has been a total of 4 new home permits issued this year. Park fees were collected from three commercial building projects as well. Keyland Homes is continuing to work on a concept plan for residential homes northeast of town, but staff have not seen those plans yet.

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

**4. New Prague Community Garden Funding Discussion**

Planning Director Ondich explained that Heather Novak from the Community Garden near Philipps Square reached out to the City, requesting \$4,861 for garden beds and \$684 to \$960 for dirt. The Community Garden would like 6 low cedar beds, 6 ADA compliant tall metal and cedar beds, and 38-40 cubic yards. As some background information, they currently have 22 gardeners with 51 beds with 1-4 people on a waiting list. In the future, they'd like 75-100 beds. Staff are not concerned about the garden getting larger. The purpose of the garden is to help low-income individuals, seniors or residents in townhomes and apartments to affordably garden food or for recreation. There was no

formal written agreement with the City and the Community Garden, but they gave them verbal approval in 2004/2005. They have received SHIP (Statewide Health Improvement Program) grants in the past to repair or replace beds. Although the City has never given money to the Community Garden, the city does trim and mow around the beds.

Dohm mentioned that she visited the Community Garden before the Park Board meeting and found out from a gardener that all the beds are private.

Planning Director Ondich explained that each person must rent two beds and each bed costs \$5.

Dohm thought that the money shouldn't come out of the Park Board because it doesn't feel like it's open to the public. It seems like an exclusive amenity.

Planning Director Ondich suggested that information on the Community Garden could be added to the city website stating that it's open to the public. It would help people become more aware.

Dohm said that when she visited the Community Garden, about 75% were vegetables and 25% were flowers. Most of the gardens are well maintained and some beds are fenced off. She believed that the city shouldn't contribute to the privately paid boxes that would benefit a select few people. However, the city could contribute compost to the site. The gardener she had spoken to was paying about \$25 plus water fees. None of the garden beds looked to be in disrepair.

Planning Director Ondich explained that the garden beds were rebuilt in 2019 through a grant.

Barten inquired about the church's community garden in town.

Dohm explained that the church's community garden is run by volunteers and donated to the Peace Center.

Bisek asked about funding for the church's community garden.

Dohm stated that everything was organized by Rotary and grants were used to provide funding. There is an annual donation drive to local businesses, which helps fund the purchasing of seeds and other supplies. No one had an individual box. Dohm recommended that New Prague Community Garden could apply for more grants.

Barten suggested that the city could wait for the conclusion of the Small Area Plan before considering investing in the community garden.

## **5. Foundry Hill Park Batting Cages Discussion**

Planning Director Ondich explained that the New Prague Baseball Booster Club would like to install batting cages at Foundry Hill Park in the fall of 2024. The New Prague Baseball Booster Club is not asking for a monetary contribution but seeking equipment and labor support such as earth work/grading/excavation, and augering holes for batting cage supports and putting down aggregate. The batting cages would be located on the northeast side of the ballfield area. The area would be open to the general public and won't be locked.

Barten inquired if the city was okay with the layout of the batting cage.

Planning Director Ondich stated that the City is okay with the plan. The city would be doing the augering and footings. If any adjustments need to be made that can be done.

A motion was made by Dohm, seconded by Becka, to recommend approval of the batting cage donation at Foundry Hill Park. Motion carried (5-0).

## **6. 2025 Budget and Future Project Discussion**

Planning Director Ondich introduced the 2025 budget and future project discussion. Each year, the Park Board must begin their budget discussions for the coming years and the 5-year project plan (2025-2029). The project list includes \$148,126.25 in projects which is a decrease from the 2024 budget. Of the total initial budget request, \$43,126.25 is the City's local match for the Active Transportation Grant which will see a sidewalk improved along 12<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. After the Comprehensive Plan is complete, staff will work on a specific Park Plan which will help detail the project list. The existing project list has been exhausted from the 2012 Park Plan.

Dohm stated that there should be more activities for young adults.

Barten suggested that a splash pad could be added as a site plan near the old swimming pool. A thoughtful design could be made while also considering the relation of the existing baseball field. The City could also consider conducting other studies such as a pedestrian and bike study for the City. The City could contribute to the POPS facility. POPS will raise \$1 million for the construction of the facility but that money won't go towards any other features such as seating, shading, or grass. Funding could potentially go towards landscaping. Otherwise, the City could explore ADA playgrounds. Additionally, the City could create a park reforestation plan or tree ordinance, which could also address the loss of ash trees. Shading for Central Plaza should be considered earlier rather than later.

Barten believed that the park shelter at Sliding Hill Skate Park shouldn't be the highest priority.

Bisek proposed that the City could add lights to the tennis courts since they currently don't have lighting. Lots of students like to use the tennis courts later in the day.

Dohm noted that the parks need more amenities for older children and teenagers.

Barten inquired on what park equipment needs to be replaced next.

Planning Director Ondich stated that Park Maintenance does routine inspections of the equipment. There's nothing at the moment that needs replacement.

Barten asked if the City should think of a long-term plan to prevent vandalism at Memorial Park bathrooms. In a Dakota County park, it is well lit, has nearby cameras, and automatically locks at night. Could be either a whole new bathroom or a replacement. It's one of the most highly used parks with some of the worst bathrooms.

Planning Director Ondich stated that he would provide a copy of the Capital Improvement Plan for major playground replacement for review at the August meeting.

## 7. Miscellaneous

- a. **Adopt-A-Park: Electromed, Inc.** – Planner Chapman explained that Electromed, Inc. adopted Sliding Hill Park on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024. They'd like to participate in this program for a minimum of one year. They've had at least one clean up event in June. They intend to conduct four more clean up events this year.
- b. **Disc Golf Course Improvements**– Planner Chapman stated that a lot of work has been done on the disc golf course at Southside Park. All baskets and all but one tee pad have been installed. The fifth tee pad will be installed once the ground has dried up. Mulch and vegetation have been planted around each tee pad. Staff have marked all the locations of the existing baskets and tee pads on ArcGIS Online, which have helped create the maps. In the next week or two, the disc golf course signs will be printed by EFA and signposts will be purchased. In the grant application, the City agreed to host a ribbon cutting ceremony, which would be held on August 14<sup>th</sup>. The grant was made possible by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's Small Town Grant.

Becka asked if the area had been sprayed.

Planner Chapman said that staff have not sprayed the disc golf course to get rid of the bugs. It's been especially rainy the past several weeks which has likely contributed to more bugs lately. Staff can ask Park Maintenance if spraying would be possible.

Barten suggested that the City Engineer could determine if the ditch should be cleaned to fix some of the drainage issues.

- c. **Settlers Park Prairie Restoration Update**– Planner Chapman stated that Rock Leaf Water Environmental will do their site prep mowing on Thursday, July 11<sup>th</sup>. The site prep mowing will be done with a zero-turn ride-on mower. According to their RFP agreement, they will do another herbicide application this summer as

well as management mowing. A third herbicide application will occur in spring/summer 2025. Management spot herbicide will occur in summer and fall 2025 and spring 2026.

- d. Dog Park Update**–Planner Chapman introduced the dog park update. Central Ag LLC started installing the dog park fence on June 26<sup>th</sup> and completed the fence on July 1<sup>st</sup>. The dog waste dispenser and the 32-gallon trash can have been purchased. An order for the dog park signs has been submitted to EFA. The dog park rules sign will be 3' x 4' (similar to Sliding Hill Skate Park) and there will be a small dog area sign and large dog area sign to indicate which areas should be utilized for certain sized dogs. The dog park will not open until all the items are completed. Staff would also like the Park Board's opinion on having a "grand opening" event or ribbon cutting at some point after a soft opening of the dog park.

Dohm believed that having a grand opening would be a good idea so that people know it is open and established.

Wolf inquired on the concrete pad near the entry area.

Planning Director Ondich stated that staff wanted to try using the woodchips. If it becomes an issue, the concrete can be put in. The soft opening may help determine if concrete should be added.

Bisek asked if there will be a path leading up to the dog park entrance.

Planning Director Ondich replied that a woodchip path would extend from the gravel parking lot to the entrance of the dog park.

Barten inquired about mowing and how tall the grass would be.

Wolf would prefer to have mowing done in the dog park every so often.

Bisek stated that the small dog area should especially be mowed frequently.

Wolf said that the City was going to cut paths through the tall grass.

Planning Director Ondich asked if it would be okay to have some areas that would not be mowed or if the whole thing should be mowed. It wouldn't have to be mowed as frequently as the public parks.

Becka thought that they should mow the whole thing.

Barten thought that it wouldn't have to be mowed as frequently as a ballfield. It could be 6 to 8 inches high.

Planning Director Ondich said that the mower is quite large so it likely wouldn't take long to cut but was uncertain if that would impact the mowing routine.

- e. **Comprehensive Plan Update / Small Area Plan Update** – Planning Director Ondich presented the Comprehensive Plan / Small Area Plan Update. He explained that Comprehensive Plan is on hold until the Small Area Plan and the Sanitary Sewer Feasibility Study are complete. Staff are still waiting on the engineering determination of the stormwater pond for the Small Area Plan. The City did not move forward with the purchasing of Pat Sullivan's property to the west of the site. Based on the public feedback, the new draft plans show housing further away from the homes and more open space. The new draft plans also show that the multi-use surface area for the farmer's market/food trucks have extended more inward. The multi-use area also goes into the street so 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW. There will be diagonal parking on the west side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave NW. The previous plans had the stage at a 45-degree angle but now it's about 30-degrees so it's a little more north south to prevent as of an extreme glare. Grading may help reduce glare. There is no way to get rid of the glare entirely.

Dohm stated that the position of the stage should either be north-south or have the audience and the performers flipped. The stage could be moved further up to make more room for seating or audience members.

Planning Director Ondich stated that POPS and MSA believe that it's plenty big to seat up to 1,200 people. If anything, the seating area is a little large. They researched other cities and found that very rarely they used up to their capacity.

Barten thought the stage could be shifted northward so the audience wasn't as close to the alley. The City should also consider adding trees on the south side near the seating to better screen the area.

Planning Director Ondich replied that it was intended to have a visible entrance from Main Street.

Planning Director Ondich mentioned that the open space at the site should feel like it's part of the park, so people don't assume that it's part of the multi-family area and never use it.

Barten stated that trees could be a great amenity to add to the site. The City should thoughtfully plan and spend money on trees that will survive especially on this site that has been redeveloped several times.

## **8. Adjournment**

Chair Barten adjourned the meeting 7:27pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Kyra J. Chapman*

Kyra J. Chapman  
Planner