

**Meeting Minutes  
New Prague Park Board  
Tuesday, August 20th, 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, Christine Wolf, Maggie Bass, Shannon Sticha, and Youth Representative Jacob Bisek. Absent were Matt Becka and Debra Tharaldson (arrived at 6:22pm). Staff present were Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director and Kyra Chapman – Planner.

**2. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes  
July 9, 2024 Regular Meeting**

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

**3. Review Financial Reports**

Planning Director Ondich presented the July financial report. An additional \$1,018.90 in funds were added to the Park Equipment fund from residential home permits and three commercial building projects. The first expenses for the disc golf course match have come in. The \$15,000 Park Board contribution for the Outdoor Performance Facility Study was processed. City Council began their first budget discussions on August 19<sup>th</sup>. Staff have proposed a tax levy at a 15% increase but the City Council would like to reduce it to 10%. Potentially this could cut the Central Plaza shading project.

Bass elaborated that no motion was made at the last meeting and nothing has been cut yet. The first meeting was to set the stage for future budget discussions. There will likely be 5 or 6 additional budgetary sessions. There was an error on the City, County, and State side of the levy resulting in a 0% tax levy this year. As a result, the City will have to accommodate this with a higher tax levy.

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

**4. 2025 Budget and Future Project Discussion**

Planning Director Ondich introduced the 2025 Budget and Future projects discussion. From the Park Board's previous comments at the July meeting, the project lists for 2025-2029 have been updated. The tables are rough estimates, and the projects are not solidified.

Barten believed that the shade at Central Plaza seemed to jump to the top of the priority list even though it doesn't seem like an immediate need.

Dohm believed that the park is unusable for most hours of the day. The metal benches get too hot in the sun and there is no shade. Perhaps taller trees could be added instead of a shade structure.

Bass suggested a temporary canvas structure that could be removed during the winter months.

Planning Director Ondich mentioned that in a park in Belle Plaine, there is a temporary shade structure. The temporary shade structure consists of three metal poles and a canvas tarp. The canvas tarp is removed in the winter.

Wolf proposed that a roll out awning could be installed on the building next door.

Barten explained that in the long term, the trees will eventually grow to provide shade. The new shade structure would eventually become obsolete. The trees could potentially be damaged by the structure.

Bisek recommended adding umbrellas to the site.

Barten suggested swapping the existing tables at Central Plaza for the POPS site.

Planning Director Ondich stated that the City Council authorized the City Engineer to put out to quote for grading at the City Center site where the POPS facility will go. The quote would consist of grading and seeding. The Park Board could consider adding vegetation to the site as a plan. POPS will likely begin construction in spring 2025 and is anticipated to be complete around Dozinky.

Planner Chapman explained that an application for the Small Town Grant was submitted today for vegetation around the POPS site. The requested vegetation is proposed to go mainly on the western side of the stage to help buffer noise and sun glare. Although the vegetation may not be initially effective at preventing sun glare, it's anticipated that it will grow and provide shade in the future.

Barten inquired about grants for the stormwater pond.

Planning Director Ondich stated that City Council approved of grading at the site on August 19<sup>th</sup>. Staff didn't have enough time to consider the pond for that. Staff will continue to look for grant funding. Engineering and grading just for the POPS area was \$17,000.

Barten would like to add landscape architects for the full planting plan. The site won't look good if the City changes the grade of the POPS facility and then later adds a slope.

Dohm inquired about seating at POPS.

Planning Director Ondich clarified that it will be tiered by about 1 foot per row. The stage will be a little lower than the seating.

Barten recommended that park land and playground have equal importance in this so a park land focused plan that includes the plaza, playground, stormwater plan is a high priority.

Tharaldson arrived at 6:22pm.

Barten stated that the City should consider the longevity of the site, especially in terms of planting. To prevent re-tearing the ground up, it would be beneficial to dig out more feet of gravel and replace them with topsoil. In areas where the City anticipates putting in trees such as the southeastern part of the site, topsoil should be added to ensure the survival of the trees.

Bass asked if native grass could thrive in poorer soil.

Barten stated that there should still be 1 foot of topsoil.

Barten liked the idea of designing a bike park, but that money could potentially go towards a design for the splash pad.

Dohm said that the splash pad is a considerable amount of money. The City will have to determine if that is worth pursuing. It will be an endeavor to get infrastructure and utilities. It could minimally be a half a million-dollar project. The City should see if there's enough support or momentum from the public first.

Sticha suggested that the bike park could be added to the existing skate park.

Planning Director Ondich mentioned that the bike park idea stemmed from the thoughts of having a full mountain bike path around Sliding Hill Skate Park or a pump track. A pump track is a path in which you don't need to peddle much. The elevation change keeps the momentum of the bike going.

Bisek commented that at the pool, there are few admissions. It might be more beneficial to have money go towards the pool rather than a new splash pad that would only be used in the summer.

Bass said that splash pads are geared more towards young children. It would be beneficial to have something tailored for older children and teenagers.

Bisek thought it would be a good idea to add lighting to the school tennis courts. The courts are used for tennis and pickleball. There are at least 25-50 people using the fields each day. Many people use the courts until sunset in the fall or spring.

Barten suggested adding the court lights to 2025. Pickleball is a growing sport for all ages.

Planning Director Ondich stated that the Park Plan process will include surveys which will help gather the public's input.

## 5. Miscellaneous

- a. **Disc Golf Course Improvements** – Planner Chapman explained that the grant deadline was extended to September 15<sup>th</sup> due to the wet soils and frequent rains, which have made it difficult to remove and add a tee pad. The ribbon cutting ceremony will take place on September 13<sup>th</sup> at 10am. Although the digital maps have been made, their resolutions will need to be enhanced before the signage can be processed. Staff will send the enhanced resolutions of the maps later this week. At the last Park Board meeting, there were questions about possibly spraying the western section of the park for bugs. There is currently no money in the budget to spray this year or the next. In previous meetings, there were also talks of cleaning the pond. Staff found out that the pond at Southside gets cleaned every few years and the outlet that goes to the creek is cleaned when needed. To efficiently dry the western section of the park, it would have to be tiled.
- b. **Settlers Park Prairie Restoration Update**– Planner Chapman stated that Rock Leaf Water Environmental (RLWE) did their second herbicide application on Friday, July 26<sup>th</sup>. On that day, staff personally met RLWE at the site to discuss the project in further depth to clear up any confusions. Staff are unsatisfied with the current work of the project. There are several patchy areas or complete misses from the herbicide application. Staff have already specified the locations of the spraying and provided maps of this. Early last week, staff asked RLWE to come back in the next two weeks to complete the herbicide application. RLWE has not come to the site yet. The City would like a full kill before the anticipated seeding in October. So far, the site is not prepared for the intended seeding.

Planning Director Ondich stated that if a second application is not done by the end of this week, the City Attorney may be potentially involved in the project. There has been a lot more guidance given than was expected.

- c. **Dog Park Update**– Planner Chapman explained that the soft opening for the dog park began on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The Park Board can suggest and decide on a date for the official grand opening of the park. As per the Zoning Ordinance, the trees must be spaced 40' on the southern section of the parking lot and spaced 30' on the northern section of the parking lot. If deciduous trees are planted, they must have a minimum diameter of 2.5" and if coniferous trees are planted, they must be a minimum of 6' tall. The trees will be planted either this fall or next year.

Dohm stated that it's been fairly muddy around where the trees were removed. She recommended adding a nozzle to the hose at the water pump to efficiently wash off dirty dogs.

Wolf inquired about lighting at the site.

Planning Director Ondich said that lighting will be installed in the fall.

Wolf noted that a dog in the large dog area escaped under the fence near where the trees had been taken down. She was curious how many dog licenses have been sold so far.

Dohm suggested replacing the plastic dog waste bags with organics bags.

Wolf said that the trash can and picnic table should be moved so that it is inside the fenced in area.

Dohm asked why the trees were removed.

Planning Director Ondich said that the trees were in the existing fence and that they were scrubby.

- d. **Comprehensive Plan Update / Small Area Plan Update**—Planning Director Ondich stated that the Small Area Plan is complete, and Council approved the City Engineer to do initial grading work for the structure. There will be one more Steering Committee meeting for the final review of the Comprehensive Plan in the next few weeks. After the Steering Committee meeting, it will be presented to the Planning Commission in September and then the City Council in October for approval. It will also be provided to adjacent townships and counties for their feedback.
- e. **POPS Newsletter and Updates** – Planner Chapman introduced the update from the most recent POPS newsletter. The POPS Project Set meeting at the Broz occurred on August 7<sup>th</sup>. The meeting consisted of talks on the building project, fundraising totals, construction completion, POPS Gala II, and the August 26<sup>th</sup> POPS fundraiser. As of mid-July, three-year pledges have amassed a total of \$850,000 but \$300,000 have been deposited. POPS Gala II will take place on October 4<sup>th</sup> at the Park Ballroom. Since the City Center site was selected for the POPS facility, staff are now able to write grants. Several grants limit eligibility of projects based on county lines or whether they are located inside or outside the metro area. Today, staff submitted a grant application for the Small Town Grant for vegetation surrounding the stage. Staff will start working on the T-Mobile Hometown Grant to fund visual equipment and have that submitted before the end of the year.

Dohm thought the City should make it clear that the City Center site won't be beautiful and not everything will be complete once the POPS facility is built.

Barten suggested installing signage at the site that says what phase the project is at.

Dohm asked if the City has reached out to the farmers market on what they'd like the multi-use plaza to look like.

Planning Director Ondich said that the City will reach out to them when the feasibility study is conducted.

Barten noticed that there were lots of descriptions of the multi-family building.

Planning Director Ondich said that those details were based on the feedback given from the neighbors to fit the character of the neighborhood.

## **6. Adjournment**

Chair Barten adjourned the meeting 7:09pm.

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