

**MINUTES
CITY OF ELKO NEW MARKET
PARKS COMMISSION MEETING
March 13, 2024
6:00 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Sutton called the meeting of the Elko New Market Parks Commission to order at 6:01 p.m.

Commission members present: Sutton, Vernon, Jones, Hokeness and West

Members absent and excused: None

Staff Present: City Administrator Thomas Terry, Maintenance Worker Derek Cavanaugh and Planner Jake Skluzacek

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Sutton led the Parks Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Sutton asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Planner, Jake Skluzacek, informed him that there were no changes to the agenda.

A motion was made by Vernon and seconded by Jones to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried: (5-0).

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Bergstrom – 255 James Parkway

Bergstrom thanked the Commission and introduced himself. Bergstrom runs the Elko New Market Baseball Youth Program. Bergstrom wished to know what was being discussed during the Facility Reservations discussion that was on the meeting's agenda. Bergstrom also stated that the New Market Baseball Association (NMBA) would like to again reserve the fields at Wagner Park this Summer for games and practices and will submit an application.

Bergstrom asked the Commissioners to consider the creation of more ball fields within the City. NMBA typically enrolls 175-200 youth per year to participate in ball activities. Bergstrom stated that NMBA is unable to do softball games because there is no regulation sized field available for use in the City. Bergstrom also mentioned that he is the caretaker for the two fields owned by New Prague School District that are located at the Eagle View Elementary School. Bergstrom again asked the Commission to consider adding more fields to the City and for their continued support of youth sports.

Chair Sutton thanked Bergstrom for speaking. Bergstrom asked the Commission if they had any questions for him. There were no questions at the time.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Planner, Jake Skluzacek, informed the Commission of a typo on page 2 of the minutes. Skluzacek stated that Staff will correct the error.

A motion was made by Hokeness and seconded by Jones to approve the minutes of the January 10th, 2024, meeting with change discussed.

Motion carried: (5-0).

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Tree and Bench Donation Program Discussion

Skluzacek continued to present on what a potential Tree and Bench Donation Program may offer to the City's Park System. Skluzacek explained that the program would allow anyone, resident or not, to purchase and donate to the City a tree and or bench to be placed in a City park or along a City trail. Typically, items are donated as a memorial but there would be no criteria for what would qualify to allow for the greatest flexibility for the program.

At the January 10 Parks Commission meeting, Staff recommended that the applicant only be able to choose the general location in which they would like a tree or bench placed. Staff would then work with the applicant to ensure that the placement of the item would not cause any issues as it relates to utilities, sightlines, and other various factors of consideration. Skluzacek stated that the budget impact for a program such as this would be minimal as actual costs could be billed, including installation and shipping. Staff recommended providing applicants with approximate costs but be sure to include language stating that actual costs will be invoiced to the applicant.

After discussion at the January 10 meeting, it was decided that there was a desire by the Commission to implement a local Tree and Bench Donation Program. The Commission agreed with Staff's recommendation to provide estimated costs but ensure that actual costs are covered by the applicant. Opinions differed among the Commission regarding how many bench options should be provided. Skluzacek noted that the Commission can narrow down the options once Staff compiles an initial list for viewing. The Commission also had differing opinions on which trees to include as part of the program. Discussion took place on the City's approved tree planting list and inclusion of ornamental trees as part of the program.

Skluzacek presented a draft application form, bench and tree options, budget considerations, and maintenance considerations for further feedback and direction from the Commission. The Commission recommended stronger language on the draft application form stating that Staff will select the final location of trees and benches.

Next, Skluzacek presented recommended tree options to the Commission. Staff recommend using the City's existing approved tree planting list. The list was reviewed by the City's Landscape Engineer at Bolton & Menk who did not see any issues with any of the trees listed being used for a donation program, including ornamental trees. Discussion took place on plaques and whether they should be included with tree donations. Skluzacek mentioned an alternative to physical plaques at the location of tree donation could be to house the plaques at City Hall. This ensures that the plaques live past the tree's lifespan and would also reduce maintenance concerns with Public Works caring for the plaques. Discussion took place on other alternatives to physical plaques at the location of tree donations. After discussion, it was decided to include the memorials or names on the City's website and City slideshow rather than ordering physical plaques.

Staff recommend using one bench option for the program, the Riverview B70 All Steel Bench. This was the same bench that was donated by Commissioner Hokeness in Pete's Hill Open Space. Staff recommend using the same bench to provide a uniform look for the program. The Commission was in favor of this bench option and using physical plaques for the donated benches. The color of the bench is to be specified by City Staff. Staff may remove or relocate the bench at any time.

Discussion took place by the Commission on the budget considerations and estimated pricing of trees and benches. Skluzacek informed the Commission that these estimates were based on the City of Edina's program and could be adjusted to more accurately represent expected pricing. Staff will work with vendors to obtain more accurate estimates for the program.

Lastly, Skluzacek discussed maintenance and repair considerations with the Commission as part of the program. The City will be responsible for planting, maintaining, and caring for trees. If the tree becomes damaged or diseased, the City will replace it within a 5-year warranty period. After the warranty period has ended, the City will not replace any damaged or diseased trees. Deciduous trees with diameters of at least 2 ½ inches will be planted. Coniferous trees shall be no less than six feet high at time of planting. Ornamental trees with diameters of at least 1 ½ inches will be planted. These recommendations are consistent with the City's Landscaping Ordinance for new homes.

Benches will be repaired and maintained for the bench's lifespan. Benches will not be replaced if they are unable to be repaired past their normal lifespans. The City also reserves the right to relocate or remove a bench at any time. Plaques will be the same size and color for all benches.

The Commission was in general agreement with Staff's recommendations for the program. Staff will incorporate changes as discussed and present the program to the City Council for final approval at a future meeting.

Discussion took place on various Public Works items before Maintenance Worker, Cavanaugh left the meeting. Cavanaugh provided updates that the basketball courts were re-installed at Rowena Ponds. Discussion took place on a pickleball event proposed to take place during Fire Rescue Days.

B. Alcohol in the Parks Discussion

The Fire Rescue Days Committee made inquiries leading Staff to discuss potential amendments related to City Code Sections 8-2-5: Alcoholic Beverages and Glass Containers and 8-2-9: Additional Restricted and Prohibited Activities. The Fire Rescue Days Committee is planning on a “beer garden” to be located in Wagner Park for this year’s event. In the future, the Committee would also like to have the ability to hold a raffle. Both events are not currently permitted due to restrictions in the City’s Code.

Currently the City Code only permits 3.2 percent malt liquor and wine within City owned parks. 3.2 percent malt liquor has been increasingly harder to supply as Minnesota is the only state that still requires 3.2 percent be sold in grocery and convenience stores. In order for the Fire Rescue Days Committee to operate a “beer garden” not limited to wine and 3.2 percent malt liquor, City Code Section 8-2-5 would need to be amended. Skluzacek noted that any changes would also affect the current Wagner Park Shelter Rental Form and the proposed Park Facility Rental Form.

Staff recommend eliminating language referencing “3.2 percent malt liquor and wine” in City Code Section 8-2-5 and replacing it with “malt liquor and wine”. Additionally, Staff also recommended prohibiting kegs entirely within City Parks. Previously, kegs had been allowed so long as a permit was obtained.

Staff recommend adding language to Section D of City Code Section 8-2-9 to include an exception for gambling at community events with approval by the City Council. A new section would be created that would include only the language related to abusive, profane, indecent language, or conduct still being prohibited in City Parks.

Discussion took place on specific language and details regarding any potential Ordinance Amendment. The Commission was in general agreement on the Staff’s recommended changes. Staff informed the Commission that the changes would be submitted for final approval by the City Council at a future meeting.

C. Facility Reservations

Planner Skluzacek presented information to the Commission continuing their discussion from previous meeting about ball field reservations. The City owns and maintains three ball fields in the City. Reservations for the fields are available from the last week of April through the end of August. Currently, there is no fee charged for field reservations. The primary user of the fields is the New Market Baseball Association (NMBA). In the past few years, concerns arose regarding the field reservation process. The Parks Commission changed the start time of field reservations from 10 AM to 11 AM as a compromise between field users and Wagner Park Shelter rental users. The Parks Commission also directed Staff to draft a new reservations form which incorporated research from other city’s forms.

Skluzacek next went through the current reservation process with the Commission. For a City ball field to be reserved the organization, league or individual needs to complete a rental agreement form and a City waiver form. They must also provide a refundable damage deposit

of \$200 and liability insurance information. If a reservation is for multiple dates, the renter is asked to provide a full schedule that includes practices, games and a reasonable number of alternative dates for weather related cancellations. Staff then give final approval for the reservations based on existing field availability. The current process is not proposed to be changed, simply the way in which reservations are to be made and accepted by the City.

Historically, the NMBA has been the only league requesting time. As the City grows, demand for field use is rising. To maximize opportunities for field usage, Staff recommend that a priority registration deadline is set. Requiring a schedule by certain dates allows for the greatest use of the fields for all groups interested. Skluzacek noted that field use is restricted for games after 11 AM from Fridays-Sundays to accommodate for Wagner Park Shelter rental parking. Field use is further restricted on Thursday evenings from June 10th-July 30th for Family Fun Nights.

Staff recommended approving a priority-based reservation system with the accompanying categories, fees and registration deadlines at the January 10 Commission meeting. After discussion, the Commission decided not to charge any fees for reservations in 2024 but may institute fees later in the future as demand increases. The following priority categories and registration deadlines were identified by the Commission at the January 10 meeting:

- **Priority 1** – Refers to the programs and activities of the Elko New Market Baseball Association. Registration deadline – February 29th.
- **Priority 2** – Refers to local non-profit groups/clubs, agencies, parks and recreational programs and adult service organizations. Registration deadline – March 14th.
- **Priority 3** – Refers to local religious organizations for worship and adult or youth instruction, political parties, partisan issue organizations and local adult/youth special interest, recreational, or social groups/clubs/associations. Registration deadline – March 28th.
- **Priority 4** – Refers to for-profit businesses, educational institutions, non-profit organizations located outside of the City, or non-resident groups whose primary affiliation is considered to be located outside of the City. Registration deadline – April 11th.

Staff additionally recommended approving an updated Park Facility Rental Form. This form was largely based off the existing Wagner Park Shelter Rental Form but included additional language addressing field use and a fill-in choice box that indicates which facility, fields, or shelter, is being reserved. The choice to use one form for all City Facilities reservations is recommended by Staff as it simplifies the reservation process for both residents and Staff accepting applications. After discussion, the Commission agreed that one form for all facility rentals is preferable to separate forms for separate facilities. Commission West wished the form to include language relating to loss of damage deposit for not following any of the rules and regulations at the January 10 meeting. That additional language was included in a final draft presented to the Commission by Skluzacek. Skluzacek noted that some sections of the form were intentionally left blank as the alcohol information was to be dependent on the Commission's previous agenda item. Staff will make additions to the form with the correct information related to alcohol use for City Facility reservations.

The Commission was in agreement to recommend that the City Council approve the updated Park Facility Rental Form, priority registration deadlines, and the accompanying guidelines. Staff will present the updated reservation process to the City Council for final approval at a future meeting.

D. August Ventures, LLC – Public Land Dedication Discussion

Planner Skluzacek presented an application for preliminary plat for Parkview Meadows, applicant August Ventures, LLC. The property is located north of City Hall and east of James Parkway and is approximately 33.17 acres. Residential development of 85 single-family lots has been proposed for the property. Skluzacek shared the surrounding neighborhood conditions, all of which were compatible with single-family land uses. Skluzacek also displayed graphics depicting the submitted application for preliminary plat.

The developer is proposing 3.01 acres of public land dedication as part of the plan, exceeding the 2.65 acres required by the City's public land dedication Ordinance by .36 acres. The additional land dedication is proposed in exchange for City Code deviations being proposed as part of the proposed PUD Zoning for the development. The City Ordinance requires 8% of the land to be dedicated for public use or 8% of the land's value to be dedicated to future park and recreation facilities. In this instance, Staff recommends taking the land in-lieu of cash dedication due to the proposed area being part of the Public Facilities Master Plan.

In 2008, the City Council adopted a Public Facilities Master Plan which identified the location of future municipal campus facilities. The future campus could include a future City Hall, Police Station, Fire Station, potential Community Center, and Park Area. The identified location included land directly north of the existing City Hall and extends north to James Parkway. During concept review of the proposed development in 2022, the developer proposed a row of single-family home lots on the south side of James Parkway. This concept received positive support from both the Planning Commission and the City Council. The property proposed for development includes property identified in the Public Facilities Master Plan for a future municipal campus. For this reason, Staff recommend that land dedication be accepted in the southwest portion of the proposed plat.

City Administrator Terry provided the Commission with more background related to other properties surrounding and included in the Public Facilities Master Plan to show the Commission what has been assembled so far and what is still needed.

The Comprehensive Plan does identify a park search area for a Neighborhood Park adjacent to the property proposed for development. Nearby parks include Whispering Creek Park although the property is also serviced by Wagner Park's service area. Skluzacek presented information related to trails, sidewalks, access, roads and transportation. Discussion took place by the Commission.

It was moved by Hokeness and seconded by Jones to recommend that the City Council accept land dedication rather than cash-in-lieu as part of the public land dedication requirement for Parkway Meadows, applicant August Ventures, LLC.

Motion carried: (5-0).

7. UPDATES & REPORTS

A. February Parks Commission Update

Planner Skluzacek had his report attached to the packet and briefly discussed upcoming projects. Skluzacek asked Commissioners if they wanted the Family Fun Night schedule for 2024 printed out before they left for the night. Several Commissioners requested printed schedules.

B. February Parks Financial Report

Planner Skluzacek had his report attached to the packet. There was no discussion on the February Parks Financial Report included in the packet.

8. PARKS COMMISSIONER'S QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Commissioner Hokeness recommended replacing the Woodcrest Park basketball court as it is in need of repairs. City Administrator, Thomas Terry, reminded Commissioner Hokeness that the Commission already discussed improvements to the court and there was not enough in the budget to replace the court and the climbing equipment. The decision at the time was to replace the climbing equipment first and the court would be redone later on as funding allowed.

City Administrator, Thomas Terry, gave the Commission an update on the Niagara Bottling development and its current status. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is still in the process of reviewing the City's water appropriations permit request for additional usage before any construction will begin. Staff are expecting a final determination from the Department of Natural Resources on the permit sometime this Summer.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Parks Commission is set for Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 6:00 PM at City Hall in the Council Chambers.

10. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by West and seconded by Jones to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m.
Motion carried: (5-0).

Respectively submitted by:



Jake Skluzacek
Planner 1