

**CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS  
DAKOTA COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES**

**MARCH 8, 2005**

The March 2005 meeting of the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, March 8, 2005 in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 1101 Victoria Curve. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

The following Commissioners were present: Chair Richard Spicer and Commissioners Dave Libra, Stan Linnell, Larry Craighead, and Paul Portz. Commissioner Missie Hickey arrived late. Commissioner Raymond Morris was excused from the meeting. City Staff present were Parks Project Manager Guy Kullander and Administrative Assistant Patrick C. Hollister. Mr. Hollister took the minutes.

**MINUTES**

Commissioner Libra moved approval of the February 8, 2005 Parks and Recreation Commission Minutes.

Commissioner Linnell seconded the motion.

**AYES: 5**  
**NAYS: 0**

**SOMMERSET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS**

Chair Spicer acknowledged and welcomed representatives from Somerset Elementary School. Chair Spicer invited Somerset Principal Mary Bowman to the podium.

Ms. Bowman said that she was at the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on behalf of the elementary school to ask the City for help in funding a new playground.

Chair Spicer recalled that the City had provided help to Mendota Elementary in the past for their playground equipment.

[Commissioner Hickey arrived at this point.]

Ms. Bowman introduced Ms. Elise Jameson, PTA Treasurer, and Mr. Brian Farrell of the Somerset Parent Playground Committee. Ms. Bowman said that the current playground equipment at Somerset Elementary was not appropriate for the size and age of their students. Ms. Bowman added that the equipment no longer meets current safety requirements. Ms. Bowman displayed a photograph of Somerset Elementary playground.

Ms. Bowman said that the school wanted to extend the path and build “four square” courts and a full size basketball court. Ms. Bowman said that the cost of the improvements is estimated at about \$50,000, not including site preparation. Ms. Bowman said that the school is asking the City for help with the cost of the play equipment, in the amount of \$15,000 or 1/3 the cost of the equipment.

Chair Spicer said that he believes that the most the City has contributed to such a project in the past is \$8,000.

Ms. Bowman said that the school has done a lot of fundraisers for this project.

Chair Spicer asked what the balance of the Special Parks Fund would be after a contribution was made to the playground equipment.

Mr. Kullander said that it would be about \$200,000. Mr. Kullander added that it is possible that the playground improvements would require a wetlands permit due to the proximity to the wetlands.

Ms. Jameson said that the PTA has been saving money for years to make a contribution to the school for these improvements, and that they have received \$6,000 in donations from parents and \$6,000 in donations from the Sibley hockey boosters. Ms. Jameson said that they are approaching the \$30,000 mark. Ms. Jameson said that the plan is to include fun, unique elements such as an independent climbing wall and a space net. Ms. Jameson said that the steel pipe dome structure is no longer up to code. Ms. Jameson said that siblings of T-ball players and their moms spend a lot of time at the school’s play equipment.

Ms. Bowman said that the school did an exercise in which the kids drew up their dream playground.

Chair Spicer said that he was sympathetic to the request, but that the question was how much the City should contribute. Chair Spicer said that any money provided would have to come out of the Special Parks Fund. Chair Spicer said that he could recommend \$10,000 but that giving more would be difficult given the current fiscal situation for local government.

Commissioner Portz said that he could agree with the \$10,000 figure, which would leave about \$200,000 in the Special Park Fund. Commissioner Portz asked when the project would be completed.

Ms. Bowman said that the school planned to complete the project by July 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Commissioner Linnell asked if the basketball and four square area would have a fence.

Ms. Bowman said that it would not, but that it would be far away from the creek.

Commissioner Portz remarked that the City had its own problem with a basketball court too close to a steep slope.

Commissioner Linnell asked what erosion control measures would be used during construction.

Ms. Bowman said that they would use a Filtrex sock, which is an approved MnDOT method.

Commissioner Portz moved to recommend that the Council contribute \$10,000 from the Special Parks Fund for the playground improvements at Somerset Elementary School.

Commissioner Hickey seconded the motion.

Commissioner Linnell remarked that the community will get a lot of use out of this equipment and that the contribution represented a good partnership with a local school.

**AYES: 6**  
**NAYS: 0**

Mr. Hollister explained that the Parks Commission's vote was only a recommendation and that this item would go to the March 15 Council meeting for a decision.

### **RECREATION PROGRAMMER'S REPORT**

Chair Spicer asked for an update on Ms. Gangelhoff's status.

Ms. Hollister reported that Ms. Gangelhoff was recovering well from surgery and that she would be back to work soon.

Chair Spicer complemented Ms. Gangelhoff on the programs that she had planned for summer.

### **ROGERS LAKE SKATEBOARD PARK**

Chair Spicer said that he had received a call from resident Ira Kipp, who lives by Rogers Lake, claiming that the City's new Tier I skateboard park was never used and that it was a waste of money. Chair Spicer asked Staff to write a letter to Mr. Kipp explaining that all indications to the Parks and Recreation Commission are that it gets heavily used and explaining why the Parks Commission was considering spending more money to improve it.

Commissioner Libra said that it might be a good idea to use the Heights Hilites to raise awareness among the citizens of the parks facilities that the City has and to promote the use of those facilities.

## **SKATING RINKS**

Commissioner Craighead commented that Ms. Gangelhoff had provided impressive numbers on how many skaters had used the City's parks. Commissioner Craighead said that the rinks had received quite a bit of use.

Chair Spicer said that the Parks Commission had received a suggestion from the Council member that at least one of the rinks be closed.

Commissioner Linnell suggested summarizing the figures on skateboard park use for the Heights Hilites.

## **ECO-LAB REDEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN**

Mr. Kullander presented a copy of the Eco-Lab Redevelopment Concept Plan submitted to the City by Opus. Mr. Kullander said that the Planning Commission and the Council were reviewing this concept plan in February and March and that this same evening there was a neighborhood meeting hosted by the developer at Mendakota Country Club.

Chair Spicer said that he was mainly concerned about the bike trail, vegetation preservation and the provision of a bench.

Mr. Kullander pointed out that OPUS had revised their original Concept Plan after last Tuesday's Council meeting and that the single condominium building was now two buildings. Mr. Kullander added that in the discussions with the Council about the trail, OPUS had expressed a preference for placing the trail along the west side of the development.

Commissioner Craighead said that he was concerned about winding the trail through the trees and that it may not be a good idea to run the trail over the hill.

Mr. Kullander said that there was also discussion at the Council meeting about the width of the streets and whether the streets should be public or private. Mr. Kullander said that the Council had said that they prefer public streets to private streets. Mr. Kullander added that Dakota County has already indicated that they will require a dedication of an additional 17 feet of right-of-way along Wachtler Avenue. Mr. Kullander said that a copy of OPUS' formal application will be presented to the Parks Commission at their May meeting.

Commissioner Craighead said that it would be nice if the pond could be a skating rink in the wintertime.

Mr. Kullander said that the homeowner's association would probably own and maintain the pond areas. Mr. Kullander said that the developer is interested in beginning site work this September or October and completing the entire project in 2007.

Commissioner Linnell said that the path would better serve residents if it were along Wachtler Avenue. Commissioner Linnell asked about the fill that the developers were planning to bring in.

Mr. Kullander said that the developers want to bring in eight feet of fill. Mr. Kullander said that bringing in the fill is cheaper than the removal of the bedrock. Mr. Kullander said that the developers want to allow walkouts and lookouts in the town homes.

Commissioner Linnell said that the developers should be required to plant new trees if they are taking a significant amount of trees out and recommended that plans should be developed to connect this development with a trail along Highway 13 to the trails at Lilydale Road/Valley Park.

## **UPDATES**

Mr. Kullander reported that the Mayor had received a letter from a resident near Valley View Heights Park asking that the playground equipment be replaced. Mr. Kullander stated that upgrades are currently scheduled for 2007.

Mr. Kullander announced that the improvements to the Skateboard Park were scheduled to commence on March 7. Mr. Kullander added that there have been a lot of articles in the newspaper lately about the Metropolitan Council's 2030 Parks and Trails plan, which shows there is a possibility of connecting a future north/south County trail to Mendota Heights' own trails and the NURT trail system.

## **VERBAL UPDATES**

Staff provided the following updates:

- Police Report

## **ADJOURN**

Commissioner Libra moved to adjourn.  
Commissioner Portz seconded the motion.

**AYES: 6**

**NAYS: 0**

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.