



Public Services – Parks & Recreation

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OF THE
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2021
COUNCIL WORK SESSION ROOM OF ANOKA CITY HALL
2015 FIRST AVENUE, ANOKA MN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairperson Steve Nelson, Joe Anderla, Mike Clark, Mark Beckenbach, and Sam Scott

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Derek Sebesta, Mary Blankenship, Terri Poe, and Julie Huspek

GUEST PRESENT: Council Member Jeff Weaver, and Heritage Preservation Commission Member Barb Thurston

GUESTS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Council Member Erik Skogquist, Council Member Elizabeth Barnett, and Council Member Brian Wesp; New History Representatives Tamara Halvorson and Lauren Anderson; Heritage Preservation Commission Member Colleen Hansen; Bjorn Skogquist

STAFF PRESENT: Lisa LaCasse, Public Services Administrator; Nickie Jenks, Recreation Manager and Jon Holmes, Public Services Supervisor

OATH OF OFFICE

Nelson conducted the oath of office for Mike Clark.

APPROVE MINUTES

There being no changes to the January meeting minutes. A motion **was made by Anderla, seconded by Clark to APPROVE THE JANUARY 12, 2021 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD WITH CORRECTIONS.**

7 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried

OPEN FORUM

NEW BUSINESS

Amphitheater Report from New History

LaCasse introduced the subject and provided background information as to how the Park Board got to the decision to get the amphitheater re-evaluated. She referenced the email that was sent out to the Council and Heritage Preservation Commission and information included in the packet. In 2017, the 2040 comprehensive plan was put together, as part of that process a task force was assigned to study the corridor on the west side of the Rum River. During that process the City hire Kimley Horn to do a condition assessment. Windego Society hired LHB to complete a similar assessment in 2018. Both concluded that the Amphitheater is in rough condition and is a potential safety hazard to the public, it



was suggested to block off public access. In July of 2019, a group of individuals including staff, Council Member Skogquist, Park Board Member Joe Anderla and consultants from LHB and Bolten-Menk met with representatives from the State Historic Preservation Office regarding options for reconstruction, rehabilitation and demolition that were discussed during the task force process. At that time, the SHPO reps suggested the city have the amphitheater re-evaluated as a means to working toward a decision on how to move forward. In August 2020, Park Board discussed the Riverwalk Plans and amphitheater again, and decided to move forward with the re-evaluation process instructing staff to send out the Request for Proposal (RFP); the RFP was sent out to 22 local firms; five proposals were received ranging in cost from \$3,500 - \$25,000. After the Park Board evaluated the five firms, New History was chosen (\$9,800).

Halvorson and Anderson; representatives from New History went through their powerpoint and gave a report update on their research and findings regarding the Amphitheater and the re-evaluation of its historical significance. (The full report and presentation documents is available on the City of Anoka website <https://www.anokaminnesota.com/221/River-Walk---Rum-River-Trail-West> in the park and recreation section under the "parks" tab, subcategory "current projects").

Thurston commented that the presentation was interesting, but doesn't understand what the Park Board is doing with this information. LaCasse explained that the Board is trying to gather all the information necessary to help guide the City in making a decision for how to work around or incorporate the amphitheater into the Riverwalk Master Plan. SHPO indicated that knowing the status of the listing on the National Register of Historic Places could help guide the decision. The Park Board was not pursuing delisting and is not advocating for any certain concept at this time. The Riverwalk trail can be constructed along the river side of the amphitheater, but the sidewalk/trail route proposed along Ferry Street is constrained by the amphitheater and pedestrian bridge. The Riverwalk Task Force was not in agreement on how best to proceed with the amphitheater; reconstruction, demolition, restoration or preservation questions still remain.

Anderla stated that he has asked questions about this for 40 years, the money has never been available to actually do something to restore or preserve it. It doesn't look like it did in 1980, the engineering firms that have done a structural integrity report say the foundation is no good, and is past any point of preservation. He reminded the Board that there are already three sites in Anoka that are used as music venues. A better use of funds would be to fill in where the stage was, and move along with the process. The condition of the site will only get worse. He would like to see interpretive boards in that space, to show and teach people what used to be there. A plan should be made to honor the space. The site should be safe and usable to the public. A lot of time is spent talking about it, and no actions are taken.

E. Skogquist thanks New History for the presentation. He asked if it can change categories. Halvorson answered that it cannot change categories. If a structure was there but covered up, it would then lose its features that makes it eligible for listing. It is listed because of the auditorium and its function. She explained that if the plan is to de-list the structure and then demolish or change the structure, it is best to disclose that the plan is to change the site. It gets tricky if you are only pursuing delisting to change the structure. She stated that in their opinion there has been significant deterioration and that restoring the site is not feasible, but removing and covering the site also comes with pitfalls especially if funds are to be requested at either a state or federal level. The park/trail project can proceed without making a decision about the amphitheater, just plan around what is there. The site does not have to be memorialized or restored. She reassures the Board that the right steps are being taken. Even if state bond dollars are used for this project it will still have to go through a review process with the National Register, but staff can still get to the point wanted with the site.

Blankenship comments on the incredible job done at answering questions and making the presentation easy to follow. She is interested in what either Halvorson or Anderson envision happening in the space.

Halvorson reminds the board that they are Historians and not designers or landscape architects. But whatever the board decides, she suggests to have an open, and transparent process that includes the historic site. From what she has seen, transparent public processes work really well. When the sites are destroyed and never honored, there is no audience and the history is lost. Whether the entire seating area is there or not, it is still a rich place. People enjoy being able to walk, read, and see what the history used to be.

Thurston shared that the Historic Preservation Committee is currently working on a National Register for the City of Anoka. The Giddings Gardens are already on the register, and they are pursuing the stone houses. The amphitheater is important because it is part of all the Giddings structures.

LaCasse reiterated that the consultant working with the Riverwalk task force came up with an overall masterplan but the group never got to a solution. The plan discusses demolishing, partially demoing, complete reservation, ghosting it, or removing part of it. There is great potential for interactive panels along the entire corridor when considering the areas rich history. Unless the site is completely removed, it can still be interacted with. There are many pieces that are historic and important to Anoka citizens.

Nelson asked how far they can go with modifications while still maintaining listing. Halvorson informed that question ends up getting negotiated in the review process. If the site is completely changes and interpreted, then there is nothing to list. If some of it can be retained, then it may work to keep listing. Structural stabilization and doing repairs can maintain listing. Since so much of the amphitheater has been removed prior to today, there should be enough flexibility.

B. Skogquist asks if the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has grants available through the arts and culture funds. Halvorson replied that, there are grants available and the MN Historical Society is the administrator of those grants. Grants are available for capital improvements to the sites. Annual submittals are allowed for smaller grants, good progress has to be shown for larger grants. They do a great job at continuing to support projects. B. Skogquist agrees with Anderla, a lot of nothing has been done with the site for a long time. He asks the Council present if there is any political will to do anything positive to incorporate the existing structure and what are the thoughts and dreams for this site.

Nelson states that he has never gotten the idea that the community as a whole has ever wanted to restore the Amphitheater, there is a small group that is in favor of restoration. There needs to be forward motion, and a pulling together in agreeance. Anderla adds instead of spending a lot more time taking about restoration, we can continue to design the Riverwalk for everyone's enjoyment. Nelson wants a timeline for ideas, the project needs to be put into our financial future. There needs to be work sessions held, goals identified, and the project treated as if we are moving forward with it.

Sebesta circled back to talking about going forward with design plans for the Riverwalk should move forward as if the Amphitheater doesn't exist. A portion of the seating or another amenity can be kept. He reminded the Board they don't want to do is take it off the registry to demolish it because that doesn't look great to the registry.

Since the Amphitheater was determined that it can and should be kept on the registry, Halvorson suggested steps to take next. Including, master planning and pre-design, working with a consultant firm, asking the stakeholders what they would like the space to be, and holding public open houses. There is an advantage to working with consultants and design firms, they are a third party and have no emotion in the project, which allows them to provide a strong framework to move forward.

E. Skogquist brought up that when the master plan was made roughly three years ago, the task force got stuck when they reached the point of needing to make a decision regarding the amphitheater. A polling was sent out to the community the results back showed that 80-85% of the census was split between

either wanted to see the amphitheater either restored to its original functioning state, or to have it preserved as a historic site. The task force felt the results didn't help them in making the decision. Park Board and Council needs to work together and decide which direction to go. There is funding available, the initial decision needs to be made to move forward.

Blankenship commented that she would like to see a combination of what E. Skogquist and Sebesta suggested to be done. Incorporating the path next to 169 during pre-design is important. A wonderful Riverwalk and a stopping point can't be reached without incorporation of the path on top where people will be walking.

LaCasse summarizes the conversation and lists the options that have been talked about. She stated that 2022 planning dollars should be allocated to the project, potentially resurrect the Riverwalk task force, and begin working around the amphitheater with the trail plans. Planning the path next to 169 requires a plan to be set for the amphitheater. The scenic path next to the river can be planned without involving the amphitheater. The plans will be discussed further at the April park board meeting. Nelson thanks the team at New History report and the information that was shared.

Arts & Culture Subcommittee report

Jenks shared that the subcommittee met about the line-up for the concerts in the park this summer. Everyone was in agreeance of the chosen performers, and decided to move forward with the concerts in the parks for 2021. The Sunday series will be at George Green Park from 6-7:30pm, and the Tuesday series will be at the riverfront memorial 6-7:30pm. Tuesdays coincide with the farmers market that will be held in the parking lot of the Feed Mill from 3-6:30pm. There is anticipation that these two events will bring an attraction to the downtown area on Tuesday evenings.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Winter Activities Update

Rinks were closed today due to warm temperatures. The attendance numbers are on trend for typical years. George Enloe numbers were ahead of any other year, Wilson's numbers were in the thousands, Rick Sorenson's numbers are typical, and Lincoln had very low attendance numbers.

Station Cove/Park

LaCasse updated the latest progress. A couple of pictures were shared on the screen. The pictures were taken on site, with lines drawn to show the delineation of the easement. There is a 70'x50' space where playground amenities can go. It has been brought to staffs' attention that there is potential for a restroom facility because sewer, water, and electrical connection are accessible due to the Riverside development. Pond dredging was completed to create a safe cove in the river for canoe and kayak launching.

COMMUNICATIONS

A group of volunteers with the Mississippi Park Connection removing buckthorn in Kings Island this Saturday, and they are planning another shift for March.

AMU is replacing all the lights at the hockey rinks, and sunny acres with LED lighting. Lighting at Enloe was drawing a lot of wattage and blowing fuses. AMU is paying for the light upgrades. The costs will be reimbursed once AMU is reimbursed through a clean energy grant.

Informational signs were installed for Mississippi shoreline stabilization. Only one comment has been received. The resident suggested using large rocks for rip rap and putting signs up so that people don't throw the rocks into the river.

Winterfest was scheduled for February 13th but was cancelled due to extreme low temperatures. 150 activity bags stuffed with art projects and trinkets for children under 12y.o were still handed out at Enloe. The bags tournament was moved to Greenhaven, in one of the banquet rooms.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

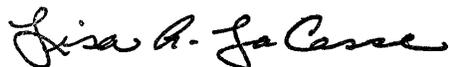
Rudy Johnson Building
Dog Park

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, **a motion was made by Clark, seconded by Beckenbach, to ADJOURN THIS REGULAR MEETING. 7 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.**

Time of adjournment 9:07 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa A. LaCasse".

Lisa LaCasse
Public Services Administrator