



## Public Services – Parks & Recreation

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
OF THE  
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD  
TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2021  
COUNCIL WORK SESSION ROOM OF ANOKA CITY HALL  
2015 FIRST AVENUE, ANOKA MN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairperson Steve Nelson, Joe Anderla, Mike Clark, Mary Blankenship, Derek Sebesta, and Terri Poe

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Mark Beckenbach

MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Julie Huspek and Sam Scott

STAFF PRESENT: Lisa LaCasse, Public Services Administrator; and Jon Holmes, Public Services Supervisor

STAFF PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Nickie Jenks, Recreation Manager

### **APPROVE MINUTES**

There being no changes to the March meeting minutes. A motion was made by Clark, seconded by Anderla to **APPROVE THE MARCH 16, 2021 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD.**

**7 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried**

### **OPEN FORUM**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### Aquatic Center 2021 – Covid-19 Plan

Jenks shared the Covid plans for the 2021 aquatic center season. Restrictions are changing frequently, the last update from Governor Walz as of May 28<sup>th</sup> is that there are no social distancing recommendations or capacity limits. There was a meeting with other facility managers about plans for the season, some facilities are just going for it with no reduced capacity limits and some are planning to slowly ease into it. Staff has decided that it will be best to ease into increasing capacity limits, especially with lessons. Staff will monitor things as the season progresses and make decisions to increase the limits. Staff and the public will be directed to follow the current recommendation to wear a mask indoors if they are not fully vaccinated. The concession staff will probably have to wear masks, because there are different guidelines for food service facilities.



City Manager Lee has confirmed that masks are no longer required in City of Anoka building. Nelson asked if the staff is all vaccinated. Jenks shared that staff will not be required to get the covid-19 vaccine, nor will they be asked if they have been fully vaccinated. Staff is trying to mitigate any potential bullying that may happen with vaccinated vs. non-vaccinated. LaCasse shared that there has been some news of this happening at the Senior Center.

Opening day is in 11 days on Saturday May 29<sup>th</sup>, staffing is full at 52 seasonal employees, and the pool is slowly filling right now. Season passes were opened to non-residents on April 13<sup>th</sup>, around 100 have been sold already and around 230 resident passes have been sold. Season pass sales are nowhere near what they are normally, excluding 2020. Daily passes will be available again to both residents and non-residents. Staff is still waiting for the state to come out with guidelines specifically for outdoor aquatic facilities. The decision whether the tables and chairs will be added back to the deck has not been made yet. Poe asked what it was like for staff to not have chairs, Jenks replied that if it were the staffs' decision there would be no tables and chairs forever. Poe thinks it is nice to have the chairs because it makes it more welcoming, but it is also nice to have all of the space on the pool deck. Blankenship asked if concessions will be going back to the normal menu. The concession menu will resume back to normal as long as vendor prices haven't increased substantially. Overall, staff is very excited for the upcoming season and encourages everyone to come enjoy the water, it will be fun and safe.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **Capital Improvement Budget: Review 2022 and Establish plan for 2023-2026**

LaCasse shared that staff has not had any meetings with the City Manager or the finance director regarding the budget review for 2022. The changes that Anderla had suggested in the March meeting were completed, which was organizing the projects further into categories like the focus for 2022, the focus for 2023-2026, and projects that will be funded through park dedication, and unassigned projects. Staff has no idea how much capital will be made available for parks in 2022. The requested permission to submit a grant with a city contribution of \$300,000 for the skate park was approved at the council meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. The only push back from council was the price tag of \$700,000 estimated for the bathroom addition and the skate park. One reason the price of the bathroom is so high is because it will not be able to go where the existing bathroom is that is currently out of order. Water and sewer lines will have to be added because the location will be changing. It is difficult to get estimates right now because companies don't want to put energy into creating an estimate unless there is a commitment. Anderla asked where the bathrooms would be moved to. Holmes would like them to be on Western St, between the shelter and the skate park. It would be centrally located for almost all of the amenities at John Ward. Anderla would like staff to think about having capabilities to have that restroom be opened all year long. There are not enough heated restrooms within the city and most of the parks allow for year round use.

The budget review for capital and equipment improvement will be at a work session with council on June 28<sup>th</sup>. Anderla asked what the next step is if we ask for too much money, and if bonding was an option. LaCasse replied that our bonding capabilities are limited right now because the city helped the ice arena bond for renovations, and they are trying to bond to build the Law Enforcement Training and Animal Containment facility. The city is limited to a maximum amount that can be bonded year to year. Anderla asked if money has to be found to complete the planned trail connections. LaCasse thinks that it could be funded through re-developments. Once the Highland Park development comes in, there may not be a need for the connection.

LaCasse asked the board if there were any items on the list that were hot tickets for themselves, they can be moved up in priority. It's nice to have ideas always on the back burner. Anderla thinks one of the reasons these projects aren't ever a priority is because residents aren't going to council meetings about

their comments or concerns. Nelson commented on parks and recreation not having a workable budget, and it almost seems pointless to have a park board if a budget is severely cut and inhibitive.

Blankenship asked if the Northstar Commuter Rail would change the type of development that would be going in there. As of now, there has been talk of a high density development in that area, like R4. If the rail goes away, the high density development wouldn't be necessary. There has been talk about that station being an Amtrak stop as well. They are talking about taking the Northstar Commuter away because since March of 2020 ridership has decreased 90%. Poe brought up that things are just opening up and they shouldn't take away that rail too soon, since most people should be going back to work non-remotely. Blankenship thinks that a lot of people will start to rethink actually going back to working in offices, and that a lot of companies might just keep most of their employees working remotely. LaCasse thinks that the HWY10 construction will drive more people to take the trains. Ramsey will most likely reconstruct their section of HWY10 after Anokas' section is done, Ramsey does have a lot more difficult easements to work through. The next 5-7 years on the highway might be brutal. Anderla brought up that they did the ridership study in 2020, which was the worst year to choose to do that. Ridership was down naturally because of Covid.

Anderla asked about the dock slip additions for lease. LaCasse reported that each year the docks slips generate about \$35,000 per year. She has talked to the finance director about taking that revenue and putting it back into park capital, instead of it going into the general fund. The more slips that are available for leasing, the more money that is generated.

Anderla suggested to stop adding new amenities or starting projects that council is pushing for, because the funds to maintain or replace the identified things that need to get done are not being granted. These needed repairs keep getting pushed out for new projects. Council should be brought on a tour of the facilities to see the condition that they are in. Blankenship agrees with Anderla, the conditions of things right now are not good. The informational signs at Peninsula Point Park are embarrassing, it would be better to have no signs. It is a lot easier for vandals to do what they do, when things don't look great. Money needs to be put into the things that need attention. LaCasse updated Blankenship about the signs that need replacing, staff has recently found all of the original master negatives and prints for the signs at Peninsula Point and Akin Riverside while cleaning out the old parks building on Jacob Ln. Pricing estimates on the production of new signs from the master negatives still need to be obtained. The same medium that was used for the signs in Riverfront Park would be used, it's extremely durable. If the cost of replacing the signs is around \$10,000-12,000, it could be paid for out of the general fund and done in 2021. LaCasse mentioned the backstop netting at Castle Field may need to be replaced by 2026, it's good to see that nothing else should need to be done there.

Nelson would like to approach the budget request as a well thought out list and a good opportunity to take things up with Council. Work sessions should be brought back so that we can actually talk about these subjects with council and get on the same page again. The board can reprioritize things if and when they need to be. LaCasse reminded the board that they are welcome to come to work session and Council meetings pertaining to the budget. Work sessions are always held the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month at 5:00 PM. The June work session will be a budget discussion. If there are projects that members would like to be added or moved up, LaCasse should be contacted. It's good to have ideas in the system to keep track of it all.

Nelson asked about the George Green Master Plan, if staff is still planning to finish out the plan or is the park considered finished. Brisbin St. will never be taken out, like originally identified in the plan. LaCasse would still like to either renovate the pavilion, or just get rid of it. The pavilion is currently being as storage. Ideally the master plan should be revisited. The parking lot could use an expansion, the building can be torn down, and the band shell either taken out, or repurposed. There is also the potential for the Senior Center to be moved to the Armory one day. The Military owns about 80 acres near the High

School and there has been word that they want to build a new building for the Armory on about 20-30 acres and then sell the rest. The senior center would then become a rental facility. Blankenship asked about any programs that could be offered to help with maintenance like picking up trash. There is a group that is interested in adopting the park at the Nature Preserve. The tricky thing with groups adopting parks is that they still require city staff resources. The trash pickup requests are appreciated. One notable thing is that the last time the recycling board went out to pick up trash, they complained there wasn't enough trash and they were done too quickly. Which is a win for public services. People are always coming up with great ideas but there is no coordination or actions to make the ideas come true from these people.

The items identified for the 2022 Capital Improvement Budget are:

1. Aquatic Center Boiler Replacement – estimated \$200,000
2. George Enloe Parking Lot – estimated \$100,000
3. John Ward Skate Park – estimated \$258,750
4. John Ward Park Bathroom – estimated \$340,000
5. Dock rental slip expansion Lower Rum River – estimated \$100,000
6. Port of Anoka Dock Stairway (2<sup>nd</sup> access) - estimated \$77,022
7. Rudy Johnson Park (phase 3) – estimated \$336,950

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Mississippi Riverbank Project Schedule**

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 the Council adopted a resolution approving the Mississippi River Community Park riverbank stabilization project with alternates 1, 3, and 7, A, B, and C for a total project cost of \$789,300. Angular rock will be used for rip rap, with the addition of large boulders and increased plantings. The contractor has agreed to bolster the amount of rip-rap to increase the tow at the price in the bid. Staff has been informed that placing rip rap higher on the tow cannot be done since it is not in the scope of the plan. They will try to go further to the dock area, there is about \$50,000 left over from the project grants to cover this. The ramp for the dock could be anchored to the rip-rap.

There is a preconstruction meeting on May 20<sup>th</sup>, the construction timeline will be revealed then. There are trail closed signs on the trail and demo starts May 19<sup>th</sup>. The trail will go back in once the slope is graded.

There is a 'notify me' sign up form on the cities website for emails and/or texts regarding important construction updates, as well as a webpage dedicated for project information. (<https://ci.anoka.mn.us/684/Riverbank-Stabilization>). The water level is ideal for construction right now so staff is hoping the contractor will want to start right away.

### **Miscellaneous**

LaCasse brought up an idea that staff has talked about in the past, and would like the board to think about it. There is a lot of buckthorn that needs to be removed at the Nature Preserve. The buckthorn could easily be removed and treated with the brush hog, the issue is that there is so much fallen debris that staff is unable to get the brush cutter through it all and the labor would be extensive to pay the crew to remove it all. The idea is to allow residents into a sectioned off area and allow people to take trailers of the debris out of the park for firewood use. There could be a charge of \$50 per truck/trailer or something along those lines. Staff would be utilized still just for direction and questions.

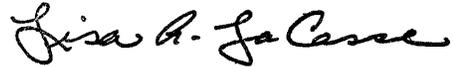
Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> there will be an event at George Green called 'Spring Back Anoka' from 11a-2p. There will be live music, food trucks, resource booths, classic cars, and a baby cow.

**Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, **a motion was made by Blankenship, seconded by Clark, to ADJOURN THIS REGULAR MEETING. 6 ayes – 0 nays. Motion carried.**

Time of adjournment 8:22 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Lisa LaCasse  
Public Services Administrator