Meeting Minutes
New Prague Park Board
Tuesday, November 14, 2023
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, Maggie Bass, Christine Wolf, Matt Becka, and Jessica Dohm. Absent was Al Hansen. Staff present were Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director, and Kyra Chapman – Planner.

2. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes
October 10, 2023 Regular Meeting

Barten suggested that the word "potential" should be removed from the sentence that states "…the Park Board supports providing up to $15,000 in Park Board funds, along with potential additional city funds…". It was assumed in the meeting that the City would provide some sort of funds.

Planning Director Ondich stated that the word doesn't have to be removed since funding could come from different city funds such as the general fund, grant funds, etc.

A motion was made by Dohm, seconded by Wolf, to approve the October 10, 2023, regular meeting minutes. Motion carried (5-0).

3. Review Financial Reports

Planning Director Ondich presented the October financial report. An additional $809.35 were added to the Park Equipment Fund from new residential home and commercial permits. The picnic tables and the Northside Park Court refurbishment that were listed in the Park Board's 2023 committed costs, have been paid. The $5,000 that is reserved for the POPS Feasibility Study will be paid if the City Council decides on a site location that is City owned. The Bolton & Menk feasibility study will be presented to City Council on Monday, November 20th for them to discuss a preferred site.

A motion was made by Becka seconded by Barten to approve the financial reports. Motion carried (5-0).

4. Ball Team Fees Discussion

Planning Director Ondich introduced the Ball Team Fees discussion. On January 10th, 2023, Park Board made a motion to increase all team fees by 25% except for the Orioles, and to negotiate an agreement that will cover fees and liabilities with Orioles. Since this discussion, staff has had internal discussions regarding Memorial Park Baseball Stadium usage. In 2021, the yearly maintenance cost of the stadium was approximately $44,628 or

$782.95 per game. Each year the City receives $15,728 from team reservations ($15,000 comes from the school district lease), which means that only 35% of the City's fees are covered. The four main teams that reserve Memorial Park Baseball Stadium include the High School, Legion, Orioles, and Town & Country. Based on their past usage, the City would have to charge $14,800 to the High School, $15,000 to Orioles, $12,000 to Orioles, and $3,000 to Town & Country to breakeven. The City would like to start having meetings or fee negotiations with these four groups before the end of the year so that the maintenance costs are covered or mostly covered.

Dohm inquired if staff have spoken to Orioles yet.

Planning Director Ondich explained that the staff have not approached Orioles yet. Staff have had internal discussions in the past regarding taking a cut from their concessions. The City of Shakopee takes a 10% of baseball concessions.

Barten asked what the cost of operation was before the facility was refurbished.

Planning Director Ondich replied that the maintenance costs were under $10,000 per year.

Barten asked if the City would be willing to take a hardline in saying that if cooperation is not provided, some services will be cut.

Planning Director Ondich stated that staff have had that discussion before but was ultimately against this suggestion. The stadium would not be up to the same caliber where the teams want to use it.

Barten inquired who has a liquor license.

Planning Director Ondich replied that Orioles holds the liquor license. Orioles is a licensed entity for three-two beer as a tenant of the ballfield. They currently do not have a formal leasing agreement with the City.

Bass proposed that there should be an agreement with the school district, Legion, Orioles, and Town & Country.

Becka was curious to know what the ticket prices and concessions are priced. It appears that the prices have gone up.

Planning Director Ondich commented that many of the teams have paid for capital improvements but that doesn't cover the annual facility expenses.

Dohm suggested that the City takes a percentage of Orioles' concessions. The Orioles could raise concession prices if need be. Furthermore, she recommended that the City give the four teams a notice of the possible price increase before having the meeting.

Wolf asked what Orioles does with their profits.

Planning Director Ondich said that staff are unsure what they do with their profits.

Dohm inquired if the $15,000 annual fee the school pays for the stadium is a lump sum.

Planning Director Ondich clarified that fee is not paid as a single payment.

Barten suggested that the City doesn't need to fully breakeven or make money.

Planning Director Ondich stated that the City does not want to put anyone out of business but the City wants to better cover facility maintenance and operation fees.

Becka recommends having some sort of agreement in place, where the City is allowed to audit. The City will provide services at a reasonable cost. The City should be able to audit to reevaluate the situation. He also suggested leasing the concession itself.

Barten suggested the City hold onto money for future amenities or improvements at the facility. Perhaps 5% annually would go back to improving the field.

Staff will set up a meeting with the teams once the 2023 use information has been compiled to begin discussions on agreements and fees for those using the stadium.

5. Dog License Fees Discussion and Dog Park Fence Update

Planner Chapman introduced the Dog Park Fence update. Staff decided that the barbed wire on the existing fence should be removed to prevent any liability issues. The existing woven wire fence is 4' tall without measuring to the long-barbed wires above.

Planner Chapman stated in a previous Park Board meeting, there were discussions regarding dog license fees. Since 2010, dog license fees have decreased dramatically, however, to promote the dog licenses, the city could require residents to purchase a god license to access the dog park. New Prague's current dog license fee is $10, whereas many Minnesota communities charge between $5-$29. However, some communities offer dog park daily or annual passes. At an earlier meeting, the Park Board suggested offering a two-year dog license or a lifetime dog license. Another suggestion was to offer a $10 dog license fee and a $20 annual dog park pass.

Bass suggested that the City could get rid of the dog license fee. The dog park could use a key fob system as a way to track and secure the park.

Planner Chapman believed that electricity was listed as an expense in the second phase of the project.

Becka asked what caused the drop in residents purchasing dog licenses.

Planning Director Ondich stated that many veterinarians stopped promoting dog licenses during the pandemic, and during the pandemic the City had limited office hours.
Wolf commented that Savage doesn't offer dog licenses because it doesn't serve a purpose.

Becka inquired how the dog's vaccination status would be enforced.

Wolf stated that the dog park group wants accountability and wants to make sure that not anybody can go into the park.

Barten doesn't want the dog license process to be administratively burdensome. There should be an online portal for people to easily pay for the license. Perhaps the City could incentivize the license. For instance, the City could offer a dog license that is good for two years, the lifetime of the dog or combine the dog license and the dog park pass together.

Planning Director Ondich replied that there is an unbelievable number of dogs that go missing and many dogs are not tagged. The police find the dog licenses useful. '

Dohm liked the idea of having a dog license that gives residents access to the dog park. The dog license could be increased to $15.

Planning Director Ondich mentioned that the City could start the dog license fee at $10 and increase the price in a few years.

Bass inquired how residents are notified of the dog licensing impending expiration.

Planning Director Ondich believed that the new system will send email notifications, reminding residents to renew their dog park license.

Barten proposed that the City could install a permanent sign at the dog park that explains that the dog license fee is $15 and an explanation of the dog license.

Planning Director Ondich stated that the City Code currently allows residents to renew their dog license annually. If the City wanted to offer a two-year dog license, the City Code would have to be revised.

A motion was made by Dohm and seconded by Wolf to increase the dog license fee to $15, which would allow residents access to the dog park. Motion carried (5-0).

Barten inquired if any action was needed for the dog park fence discussion.

Planner Chapman stated that no action was needed. The purpose of the description and the diagram was to show the revised dog park plan and adjusted quote. The new dog park plan shows that the eastern part of the fence has been shortened to allow better access to the land. The diagram also shows the two 10' gates, which will allow the Park Department to get their mowing equipment through.

Barten suggested that the 10’ maintenance gate in the large dog park area should be moved to the west for better accessibility.

Wolf mentioned that she visited the Le Sueur Dog Park and saw that they have a dog shelter that’s made of nylon-like material. The shelter straddles the large and small dog park area and are held up with poles that are similar to playground equipment poles.There was also concrete under the picnic tables.

Barten recommended that in addition to signage, a recommendations and a donation box should be installed.

6. T-Mobile Hometown Grant – Dog Park

Planner Chapman explained that in order to start writing the grant, she wanted some clarification on the small dog park area. In one diagram from October 2022, there was a small dog park area that was 60’ x 200’. However, there were other past diagrams that show that the small dog park area will be added in the second phase of the project. Staff will be coordinating a meeting with the dog park group to discuss more project details to write the grant application in the coming months.

Dohm recommended that when writing grant applications, it’s better to ask for as much as you can. Granters will never give you more than you requested. The dog park group should budget for the small dog park.

Barten suggested that the area of the small dog park could be staked or marked to better visualize the space. Solar panels could be added to the dog park site, which aligns with T-Mobile’s grant initiative to fund projects related to upgrading technology.

Barten inquired if it would be a good idea to include amenities in the dog park diagram.

Planner Chapman explained that adding details to a grant application can make the project more interesting and score higher for using key words.

7. Miscellaneous

a. **POPS October Newsletter** – Planner Chapman explained that the POPS Gala occurred on October 28th at the Park Ballroom. Although not mentioned in the newsletter, POPS has raised a total of $750,000, surpassing their goal of raising $500,000 by the end of 2023. The New Prague POPS App will be released soon. The app will cost $30 per year and offer discounts to various local businesses.

b. **Arbor Day 2024 – Tree Giveaway** – Planner Chapman stated that Red Oak (10 trees), American Plum (10 trees), and Hackberry (25 trees) were ordered from SWCD. The trees will be 3-4 ft tall bareroot trees. These trees will be offered during the Tree Giveaway next Spring.

c. **2024 Budget Update** – Panning Director Ondich stated that the City Council had a recent budget workshop late last month. So far, the Park Board Budget request for 2024 is still fully intact.

d. **Comprehensive Plan Update** – Planning Director Ondich explained that fourth Steering Committee meeting occurred on November 9th. The Open House meeting will occur on December 7th. The meeting may occur at the City's council chambers or at the meeting room at the brewery. At the Open House meeting, there will be at least two maps displaying a development constraints map and a proposed trails map.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 PM by order of Chair Barten.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kyra J. Chapman

Kyra J. Chapman
Planner