



"A Growing Community"

BAXTER PARKS AND TRAILS COMMISSION MINUTES

Monday, March 18, 2024 at 4:00 PM

Baxter City Hall, 13190 Memorywood Drive, Baxter, MN

CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting of the Baxter Parks and Trails Commission was called to order at 4:00 pm by Chair Barrack.

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Melissa Barrick, Commissioners Mari Holderness, Todd Calhoun and Council Liaison Zack Tabbat

MEMBERS ABSENT: Commissioner Josh Pennington

STAFF PRESENT: CD Director Josh Doty, Planner Matthew Gindele, Public Works Director Trevor Walter, Parks & Trail Supervisor Alex Hondl

OTHERS: Jillian Reiner, Chris Armitage, Gene & Sheila Haverkamp, Bruce & Angie Kruchten, Joe Wasnie, Nate Adams, Megan Adams, Michelle Hait and Cedric Ford

MINUTES

1. Approve Parks and Trails Commission Minutes from January 22, 2024.

MOTION by Commissioner Calhoun, seconded by Commissioner Holderness to approve the Parks and Trails Minutes from the January 22, 2024. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

2. Dog Park Site Location

Chair Barrick asked consultant Jillian Reiner of Widseth to approach the podium and give the audience a brief run down of how the two sites became the two top locations. Ms. Reiner recapped the open house comments and the matrix that brought the Commission to the two locations being proposed.

She reviewed each site location, the pros and cons of each location and cost. She asked CD Director Doty if she had covered the majority of the points of each location. CD Director Doty added that it was nice to see the public comments, both positive and negative for both sites. He noted that the Commission had received all the comments at their chairs.

CD Director Doty added that the City Council would like to see the dog park being built in 2024. Once the site is determined then the design process will take place.

Commissioner Holderness asked about the shade structures, would they go in prior to the trees being planted (Water tower location), as young trees will not provide enough shade. Ms. Reiner stated that the shade structures would go in first, with trees also. It was asked if the shade structures would be a big expense; Ms. Reiner noted a mid-grade shade structure costs \$20,000.00-\$30,000.00 for each structure. The Commission and the consultant had conversation regarding smaller trees verses the cost for larger mature trees. Commissioner Calhoun asked for the size of these structures. Ms. Reiner indicated the structures are 20 x 12, roughly big enough for 3 picnic tables. CD Director Doty added the costs can fluctuate with the final design.

Chair Barrick opened the meeting up to the public for comment.

Mrs. Sheila Haverkamp 12950 Knollwood Dr. approached the podium. She gave the history of her family selling the water tower site to the city for a water tower and fire station. She indicated that her family never would have sold the property to the city if it was intended to be a dog park. She noted that her family planted those trees on the water tower site and the family enjoys the treed area. Mrs. Haverkamp indicated that her family still owns the property to the north (15140 Inglewood Road) and northeast (6686 Woida Road) of the water tower. She stated that in the future, the property would be developed into town homes after their family is done enjoying the land.

Mrs. Haverkamp brought up the 150-foot setback between a dog park and a residence. Her concern was that once her family decides to develop their land to the north of the water tower site there will be homes right near the shared property line well within the required 150-foot setback. She stated that the dog park should have to be setback 150 feet from the property line so that when she develops, the houses won't have to be pushed back 150 feet from the property line. Ms. Reiner stated that it's not really a requirement but more of a guideline. Ms. Reiner stated that in her dog park research, she found that many communities were using a setback between a dog park and a residence of 50-200 feet so Baxter just decided that 150 feet would be a good guideline for a setback.

Mrs. Haverkamp indicated that the consultant should have zoomed further out on the site to show the amount of wetlands abutting their property. She added that the homes in that area cannot have basements because of the high water table. She indicated a couple of years ago they were boating in their front yard.

Mrs. Haverkamp's main concern is the ground water being contaminated by dog waste and questioned who is going to patrol and monitor the cleaning up after the dogs if the owner doesn't. She stated that her family member to the north of the water tower is not on city water and sewer and will be drinking and bathing in that water.

Mrs. Haverkamp spoke of the fact that her family property was annexed into the City and received grandfather status for their dog, wild turkeys, chickens, and they enjoy the wildlife around them. Her fear is the dogs barking will disrupt their animals.

Mrs. Haverkamp wasn't aware of this meeting until she reached out to Council Liaison Tabatt and he told her about this meeting on Friday. She had also emailed Councilmember Lyscio thinking that she was this Commissions Liaison. Councilmember Lyscio responded with several positive ideas for a dog

park. Mrs. Haverkamp stated that she googled dog parks and found a lot of negative as well as positive comments.

She reviewed the Baxter ordinance which states a dog must be within 30 feet of the responsible party, must abide by owners' command, shall be up to date on shots and licensed. She asked who is going to make sure the dogs are registered with the city, are there going to be key fobs to access the park, are there going to have cameras to see who is cleaning up and who isn't? Are there going to be fines for people that don't clean up after their pet? She reviewed the requirements for having a dangerous dog, they require 5-foot fencing and a covered shelter. How will people know if there is a dangerous dog in the park. Also, what is preventing a dangerous dog from jumping the fence and killing their chickens and turkeys?

Mrs. Haverkamp stated that she did research on how Pampered Pets got approved. They were required to have an 8-foot fence to deter smell and sound. She indicated that she spoke to people that live near Pampered Pets and alleged that they close their windows when the dogs start barking, not allowing them to enjoy the outdoors.

Mrs. Haverkamp noted that at the open house there were 17 people that showed up in favor of the Inglewood water tower site. She stated that is close to the same amount of people in her family in here tonight saying they don't want it on Inglewood Dr. She would like the City to take into consideration that the land her family sold to the City was intended for a water tower and not a dog park. She stated that someone told her that Baxter is growing and changing with the amount of apartment buildings. She would like to see the people building these apartments to put in a dog park for their tenants.

Mrs. Haverkamp indicated she was deeply concerned with the environmental impact the dog park is going to cause. She also provided a printout of 10 things you can do with a dog in the Brainerd area. She asked if there were any questions for her. Chair Barrick asked staff if they had any answers to Mrs. Haverkamp's questions/concerns.

CD Director Doty addressed a couple of Mrs. Haverkamp's concerns. Regarding maintenance, the dog park will be maintained the same way as all of Baxter parks. Staff are at the parks every day, mowing, trash collection, etc. CD Director Doty stated that fencing and design items have not been looked into at this point. He noted that taller fences can help with barking noise.

CD Director Doty stated that there has been opposition on both sites.

Mrs. Haverkamp stated that she hadn't had a chance to speak to staff about what happens when they are ready to pull building permits for duplexes and not being able to build a duplex 150 feet away would devalue their property. She asked why can't the parking lot be shifted to the south side of the water tower and move the park further south to create a larger buffer for future development. She noted that she is just trying to make sure their property doesn't lose value.

Mrs. Haverkamp asked if this shouldn't be researched further to see how a dog park affects the environment especially when the surrounding homes are on well and septic. She stated they have sick family members and she doesn't want them to get sicker with contaminated water. She has concern over environmental issues with the wetlands.

There was conversation in the audience that could not be heard.

CD Director Doty spoke to the setback questions. The 125 feet on the proposed Clearwater plan was from existing homes. Regarding the Inglewood property the reason there was not a setback shown was the distance was well over the required distance. He did understand the concern over the duplexes being built in the future and being closer to the setback. He also noted that there is not a specific distance from dog parks to residential homes. CD Director Doty asked Ms. Reiner to explain the distance shown on the site map. Ms. Reiner indicated that they did research that showed dog parks 50-200 feet apart from residential homes. The consultants and staff agreed with the 150 feet of separation. Ms. Reiner also indicated that she didn't picture duplexes when looking at this site. Ms. Reiner stated that during the final design the environmental items, such as the water will be looked into.

CD Director Doty pulled up the aerial and scaled the distance, it was more than 150 feet. He showed the Commission a couple of different options on the Inglewood location. He noted both sites have had concerns from the neighbors. The other site on Clearwater has high groundwater with a lot of water on the surface. Mrs. Haverkamp asked if Clearwater was originally the preferred site, why look at another location, if the consultant thought Clearwater was the better site. CD Director Doty gave the history of there being more than 10 sites and the Parks Commission got it down to these two sites. The consultants used the matrix to determine sites. He noted that neither site was rated first or second as they had two different concepts.

Commissioner Holderness stated that the Commission has been looking and talking about a dog park for years. She was not in favor of tabling the project. She would prefer to see the Clearwater site as it is beautiful location for people to walk their dogs and it is not just a dog park. Commissioner Holderness stated her motion would be the Clearwater location.

MOTION by Commissioner Calhoun, seconded by Commissioner Holderness to recommend approval of a dog park to be located at Clearwater Rd. and Grand Oaks Dr. as presented.

Chair Barrick asked if for some reason the Clearwater site doesn't work, can there be a second location instead of going through all of this again. CD Director Doty stated it could be done, Chair Barrick asked if he had any concerns with the Clearwater site, he did not feel it was not necessary.

Motion unanimously approved.

Commissioner Tabatt excused himself from the meeting.

3. OK Park Master Plan

Consultant Jill Reiner hoped the Commission had a chance to review the comments regarding the park. At the open house there was feedback against Option A, as it was the most expensive. There was a lot of positive feedback regarding updating the bathrooms, safety issues, warming house upgrade and the pickleball courts. Pickleball took over the comments and moved away from the concession stand and bathrooms. The majority of the comments were aimed at Option B. She reiterated comments from the open house. CD Director Doty added that he had a conversation with a property owner regarding Option A, the owner is not willing to sell to the city for a park. Therefore, that takes Option A out of the potential options. Ms. Reiner stated that we could piecemeal things from Option A into Option B. She gave several different options and comments regarding the ball fields, parking, the flooded rink and pickleball. CD Director Doty asked Ms. Reiner if she knew how many pickleball courts could fit into the 180' x 90' rink. Ms. Reiner indicated possibly 3 pickleball courts. Parks Supervisor Hondl and Public Works Director Walter discussed the different types of surfaces and maintenance that alternate surfaces would cost to maintain.

Public Works Director Walter asked how many people commented out of 8,500 residents regarding the park. Ms. Reiner indicated not enough, they counted about 50-75 people and didn't know how many of them were actual Baxter residents. CD Director Doty stated that every time there is a study there doesn't seem to be a lot of public input. He noted there was a lot of conversation with the residents at a Council meeting regarding the hockey boards being taken down, that can also be considered. During that meeting residents noted that recreational items like tennis and basketball have been removed from the park and not put back in or replaced with something new.

CD Director Doty stated that the fourth ball field and concession stand has been in the long-range park plan for Oscar Kristofferson Park for years. He noted that the fourth ball field is proposed in the same location as the hockey rink, one is going to have to give. He was glad to see both options on the three different plans.

Chair Barrick asked if staff was looking for a motion on one of the concepts. CD Director Doty said if the Commission is comfortable with one option, then a motion can be made. If the Commission likes one option but would like to see a few elements of it removed or added from the other option that is a possibility also.

Chair Barrick asked if the addition of the flooding rink is going to cost the city more in staff time. Parks Supervisor Hondl indicated that it would not take much more time as they are there flooding the rink near the warming house. Chair Barrick asked if basketball could go on the hockey rink during the summer. That would free up space for other items. CD Director Doty liked the idea of dual use for the parks. Chair Barrick stated that she liked Concept C with the parking on Maplewood Dr. however, she liked certain elements from Concept B also. CD Director Doty asked for clarification, on street or off-street parking on Maplewood; she liked on street as it would give more space for items in the park.

Commissioner Holderness asked about hockey, she isn't familiar with hockey, "don't they play at the Essentia complex"? Staff explained that the hockey players use the rink for practice. She asked why there are two rinks. CD Director Doty stated there has always been the need for different rinks. One for the hockey players and one for little kids with their parents learning to ice skate for the first time. Commissioner Holderness added that she likes the dual use idea. She stated she has always been for the concession stand as it would bring in more money for the park. CD Director Doty asked if she had a preference on the concepts. Commissioner Holderness said she liked Concept B, however it looked expensive. There was discussion about the off-street parking and whether the Commission wanted Concept B or C for the tennis/basketball/pickleball court.

Public Works Director asked if a new drawing could be drawn up for the Commission to review showing the elements from each of the concepts that the Commission likes. He noted that it seemed like the Commission was having a hard time visioning what it will look like with the different elements from each of the concepts that the Commission likes. He thought maybe a final concept should be put together prior to the vote. CD Director Doty stated it was up to the Commission. Chair Barrick stated she was OK with allowing staff to complete the final drawing. Commissioner Calhoun stated he lives near Berrywood Park and he sees a lot more pickleball than tennis. Chair Barrick stated that she has seen people play tennis on the Loren Thompson courts, as they are nicer courts. CD Director Doty stated he has family that plays tennis and most of the tennis players that are younger seem to play at the school courts.

MOTION by Commissioner Holderness, seconded by Commissioner Calhoun to recommend approval of Option C with a double court surface in the northeast corner of the park and with two additional batting cages and with the court surface and Hockey rink to be planned as multi-sport surfaces. Motion unanimously approved.

4. Loren Thompson Park Playset Replacement

Mr. Chris Armitage with St. Croix Recreation approached the podium. He gave the history of St. Croix Recreation being in business for close to 50 years. They are a full-service playground equipment company, from design to install. They have installed equipment all over the state including in Oscar Kristofferson Park. He stated that he has been working with staff for over a year to get the designs ready for the Commission to review. He noted that they design the equipment with a "line of site" approach so parents can see their children at all times. They also design parks so the slides face north to keep the slides cooler in the summer when they are in use. Their design uses new technology to incorporate both educational and physical elements into children's play.

Mr. Armitage reviewed the two designs with the Commission, explaining the additional equipment options (bolt-ons). He then explained the pricing to the Commission. With a complete package with all bolt-on options the total for each design was roughly \$164,000.00. If the Commission decided not to go with the additional bolt-on options the cost would be roughly \$151-156,000.00.

CD Director Doty asked if the height was the same on both designs. Mr. Armitage stated that the height is similar. Design 1 has two platforms the highest platform 120" and Design 2 has a platform height of 96".

Chair Barrick asked staff if there was a budget for this playground equipment. Parks Supervisor Hondl indicated the budget is \$157,000.00. The Commission agreed that some of the bolt-ons are going to have to be deducted to make the budget.

CD Director Doty noted that he had a resident approach him that uses OK Park. The resident expressed the need for additional ADA playground equipment. CD Director Doty stated he wasn't trying to sway the Commission, he just wanted the concern noted. Mr. Armitage added that their company makes the equipment ADA approved surface and the platforms are ADA accessible.

Chair Barrick asked for input from the Commission. Commissioner Holderness stated that she didn't care for the dome but liked the Brava Universal Swing. Chair Barrick asked if there is a way to take options out of Design 1 and put them in Design 2. Mr. Armitage replied that it could be done, however it would be more expensive. He also noted that if the spinnetic and dome were removed and the swing added the cost would be under budget. Commissioner Calhoun asked Mr. Armitage if he would keep the spinner, he encouraged keeping a spinner of sorts. Chair Barrick asked about the smaller spinner in Design 1, could that be added to Design 2. Mr. Armitage would have to look at the numbers and clear zone.

CD Director Doty confirmed that he was hearing Design 2 with none of the bolt-ons, however, include the Brava Universal Swing and the handicapped accessible Comet Spinner. Mr. Armitage asked the Commission if the cost was under budget would they be interested in adding the Athletic Arch mentioned in Design 2. CD Director Doty asked if there was money left in the budget which of the three options in Design 2 are the most popular. Mr. Armitage stated the pursuit climber is popular. Chair Barrick felt the Athletic Arch was age restrictive.

Mr. Armitage reviewed the Commissioners request to make sure he understood for the final rendering. CD Director Doty stated if the Commission is comfortable making a motion and allowing staff to take this to Council with an update on final cost. The reason being is to get the project started and completed this year. The Commission was agreeable with that.

MOTION by Commissioner Calhoun, seconded by Commissioner Holderness to recommend Design 2 without any of the options and without the spinnetic spinner and add the Brava Universal Swing and the handicapped accessible Spinner Comet from Design 1. Motion unanimously approved.

UPDATES

None

ADJOURN

MOTION by Commissioner Calhoun, seconded by Commissioner Holderness to adjourn the meeting at 5:58 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.

Approved by:

Submitted By:

Mellissa Barrick
Chair

Shanna Newman
CD Administrative Assistant