

**Meeting Minutes  
New Prague Park Board  
Tuesday, September 10th, 2024  
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, Christine Wolf, Jessica Dohm, Debra Tharaldson and Youth Representative Jacob Bisek. Absent were Maggie Bass, Shannon Sticha, and Matt Becka. Staff present were Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director and Kyra Chapman – Planner.

**2. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes  
August 20, 2024 Regular Meeting**

A motion was made by Dohm, seconded by Barten, to approve August 20, 2024, regular meeting minutes. Motion carried (4-0).

**3. Review Financial Reports**

Planning Director Ondich presented the August financial report. An additional \$56.86 (interest only) was added to the Park Equipment Fund from new residential home and commercial permits. As of 2024, 5 new home permits have been issued and park fees have been collected from three commercial building projects.

A motion was made by Barten, seconded by Wolf, to approve the financial reports. Motion carried (4-0).

**4. Pickleball Courts Discussion with Local Pickleball Players**

A large group of pickleball players introduced themselves as Ben Hilding, Sharon Steinhoff-Smith, Karen Steinhoff, Jerry Vollmer, and Toby Thietje. The group asked the Park Board to consider prioritizing pickleball courts as the Park Board determines their 2025 budget. The group was willing to help raise some funds for the courts. Preferably they would like a minimum of 6 courts to 9 courts. Sliding Hill Skate Park could be a good location since the park already has parking, and likely won't result in noise complaints due to its distance from adjacent homes. The school district could use the courts as well.

Dohm inquired how many people in New Prague actively participate in pickleball.

Hilding responded that the pickleball group at community education consist of 84 people. However, there are underground pockets so it's difficult to accurately quantify.

Steinhoff said she consistently texts 15 people regarding pickleball.

Dohm believes that pickleball is a sport that all age groups can participate in. She asked what the limitations are for the existing courts.

Hilding said that in order to play pickleball, they have to have a net. Dan Puls provides the pickleball net and then takes it down. The tennis lines don't match up for pickleball courts. Only community ed can use the net unless you have your own. Current Middle School Tennis Courts face east and west, so the sun is directly in the players' eyes. Furthermore, there are often school tournaments occurring and that schedule is not public.

Barten requested that staff do an analysis on potential locations for pickleball courts at Sliding Hill Skate Park and near the Memorial Baseball Stadium. As interim, the city could consider providing pickleball net for the tennis court for those that don't have their own. The City could potentially designate \$5,000-\$6,000 for pickleball nets.

Steinhoff stated that she would talk to community ed to see if they'd accept donated pickleball nets.

Planning Director Ondich mentioned that there is underground stormwater below the tennis courts. To put lighting at the courts, special footings would be required, which could cost roughly \$120,000.

A motion was made by Barten, seconded by Tharaldson, to consider locations for pickleball courts and consider purchasing temporary pickleball nets. Motion carried (4-0).

## **5. Move Batting Cage at Memorial Baseball Stadium**

Planning Director Ondich explained that New Prague Orioles is requesting to move a batting cage along the 1<sup>st</sup> base line side of Memorial Baseball Stadium over to an area next to the bullpen area along the 3<sup>rd</sup> base line (old pool area). The batting cage would be moved to make room for a possible second "Czech deck" seating area similar to the one at the 3<sup>rd</sup> base line. This would be at no cost to the City, but City staff may provide some labor towards the project. They intend to build it in 2025.

Wolf didn't understand the need or reason for the location.

Planning Director Ondich said that engineered plans are needed for a new Czech deck because it is a public facility. Building Code and architectural order require it.

Barten would like to see a long-term plan. There doesn't seem to be a strong argument for another bullpen. It would make more sense to move the bullpen further south.

Barten would like to investigate the need for two bullpens and see if you could fit in a new deck in that triangle area. This would allow more flexibility for the possible splash pad or other amenities that would be near the baseball stadium.

## **6. 2025 Budget and Future Project Discussion**

Planning Director Ondich stated that the City had asked our City Engineer if the City could complete plans for the City Center/ POPS and “put on a shelf” until money is available. The City Engineer did not recommend this. The City will become a MS4 stormwater City on January 1, 2026. This will come with specific stormwater requirements. In general, certain requirements and best practices may change over time. If the City knew today that they were going to build, it would cost about \$100,000 to draft up the plans. That cost would include design, construction and review. MSA is currently doing grading for the site. The bid for grading likely won’t occur until October.

Planning Director Ondich explained that after speaking with landscape architect from SEH that worked on the Central Plaza project, she provided different suggestions for shading structures. With the City’s budget constraints and be semi-temporary since the trees will eventually grow, staff recommend Soleris Sunshade. They are umbrellas made of aluminum and bolted into concrete. It will cost about \$10,000.

Dohm asked if there were holes in the existing tables.

Planning Director Ondich said that the tables do not have holes. The umbrellas would have to be strategically placed around the tables.

Dohm asked if the umbrellas can be bent or tilted.

Planning Director Ondich stated that their position is fixed.

Bisek mentioned that since it cannot be bent or tilted, it reduces the wear and tear on the structure, increasing its life expectancy.

Wolf inquired about wind resistance.

Planning Director Ondich clarified that the umbrellas are bolted into the concrete. There are openings and slats to handle the wind load. They are always open.

Wolf was concerned if the umbrellas were going to be big enough to provide shade. Of the options shown in the packet, she liked the shade structure next to the adjacent building.

Planning Director Ondich mentioned that there is \$35,000 in the budget for shade.

Dohm asked how expensive each umbrella is.

Planning Director Ondich stated that for a handful of umbrellas, it would cost \$10,000. Staff will investigate how much it costs per unit.

Barten asked in regards to the POPS/City Center site contribution if the budget table should separate that into feasibility, engineering, and construction in the annual park board budget used and park equipment 230.

Planning Director Ondich stated that he would prefer the Park Board allocate money to physical improvements to the site.

Barten suggested moving the ninja warrior course down the project list and prioritizing pickleball.

Dohm said that pickleball still meets the needs of providing amenities to young adults/teenagers.

Barten suggested that money could be allocated to splash pad and bumped up to 2025 if less money is being spent on Central Plaza shading.

Dohm recommended to delay or remove lights at the tennis court. She was concerned about doing a splash pad feasibility study since public interest has decreased.

Barten replied that in the Comprehensive Plan comments, people were interested in a splash pad. A few years ago, a group came in, requesting a splash pad as well.

## **7. Miscellaneous**

- a. **Disc Golf Course Improvements** – Planner Chapman explained that the disc golf grant opening will occur on Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am. The New Prague Chamber of Commerce helped facilitate the ribbon cutting ceremony and advertise the event. The signs processed from EFA have been picked up. Staff have or are in the process of attaching the signs to the existing signposts. The project was funded through the city cash match and the Small Town Grant by Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation.
- b. **Settlers Park Prairie Restoration Update**– Planner Chapman stated that Rock Leaf Water Environmental (RLWE) did their third herbicide application on Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>. There are still several areas at the site that are patchy with lots of green or misses. There has not been a solid kill so far. Staff will likely escalate this to our City Attorney.
- c. **Dog Park Update**– Planner Chapman introduced the dog park updates. The City has sold 53 dog licenses as of August 21<sup>st</sup>. The number of dog licenses are still down since in 2010, there were 184 dog tags. With the renewal period for 2025, staff intend to inform the public on the benefits of dog licenses.

Dohm asked what the benefits of dog licenses are.

Planner Chapman said that in addition to funding improvements to the dog park, dog licenses help the police more efficiently find lost dogs. The dog park entrance sign was posted on August 19<sup>th</sup> to help visitors find the park.

Wolf asked if there should be a grand opening.

Planning Director Ondich said that it was brought up at the previous meeting, but no one commented about it. There could be a ribbon-cutting ceremony facilitated by the Chamber of Commerce.

- d. Comprehensive Plan Update / Small Area Plan Update**–Planning Director Ondich stated that the Comprehensive Plan public hearing will be held on September 25<sup>th</sup> at the Planning Commission meeting. Comments can be submitted from now to the meeting. City Council will not take the final approval on the Comprehensive Plan until October 21<sup>st</sup>. It will be sent to Le Sueur, Rice, Scott County and adjacent townships.

## **8. Adjournment**

Chair Barten adjourned the meeting 7:27pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kyra J. Chapman  
Planner