

**Meeting Minutes
New Prague Park Board
Tuesday, October 10, 2023
5:15 PM**

1. Tour of Possible POPS Facility Locations

The Park Board visited potential sites for the Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) at Memorial Park, Sliding Hill Skate Park and City Center.

2. Call Meeting to Order

The regular meeting was called to order at City Hall at 6:11 PM by Chair Joe Barten. Members present were Joe Barten, Maggie Bass, Christine Wolf, Matt Becka, and Jessica Dohm. Staff present were Ken Ondich – Planning / Community Development Director, and Kyra Chapman – Planner.

**3. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes
July 11, 2023 Regular Meeting**

A motion was made by Dohm, seconded by Wolf, to approve the July 11, 2023, regular meeting minutes. Motion carried (5-0).

4. Review Financial Reports

Planning Director Ondich presented the September financial report. There were no additional funds added to the Park Equipment Fund from new residential or commercial permits.

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

5. POPS Facility Location Discussion

Planning Director Ondich introduced the POPS facility location discussion. Earlier this year, Bolton & Menk ranked Memorial Park as the number one site, followed by Sliding Hill Skate Park, and then City Center. Recently, staff has marked all ash trees in Memorial Park. The pink paint on the trees symbolizes ash trees and the green paint symbolizes priority removal of ash trees. Staff met with Arborist Jerry Flicek, and Dan Gullicson with MnDOT and who is an area resident, and they determined that the large oaks could be protected from construction work through a tree management plan. Some oak trees in Memorial Park are suffering from oak blight and twolined chestnut borer. Whether or not Memorial Park is chosen for POPS site, the ash trees will have to come down and staff has applied for a few grants to alleviate the tree removal expenses. As of right now, there is \$85,000 in Park Equipment Funds, which could be used for projects and funding.

Wolf explained that if Memorial Park was chosen as the site, there would be issues with congestion. Memorial Park is in the center of town, which would make it difficult to enter and exit the park during events. It would be different if the park was located at the edge of town.

Den Gardner, the Head of the POPS Committee, mentioned that through several conversations with other communities that have built performance stages, parking shouldn't be the main priority in selecting a site. People will find a way to get to the event whether there is parking on site or not. The mission statement of POPS is "to build a multi-purpose outdoor performance facility to celebrate the arts and other community gatherings – from music to theatre to dance to visual arts and much more." POPS doesn't favor one site over another and thanked the City for consideration of the three sites. The purpose of POPS is to create an outdoor performance stage. The site location is the city's decision but would still like to keep the momentum of the project going.

Dohm asked where donations have come from.

Gardner stated that the \$580,000 have equally come from business and individuals. One marketing strategy they've utilized is 100 for \$100K, which is where 100 individuals pledge to donate \$1,000 per year until 2025.

Dohm inquired if they have looked into grant funding.

Gardner explained that it's difficult to apply for grants until a location is selected.

Planner Chapman elaborated that grant funding is often limited to county lines. Some grants will only give grants to communities in Le Sueur or just Scott County. The proposed sites are located in different counties. Additionally, many grants require funds to be spent and grant work to be completed within 12 months of the grant approval. At this point in time, the project could not be completed within a years' time.

Barten suggested that the Park Board could motion to forward the project to city council without specifically favoring one site over another.

Becka was concerned that the project could get passed back to the Park Board if they didn't provide comments or recommendations.

Barten stated that when POPS presented Bolton & Menk's results to the public at Giesenbrau Bier Co., many residents had concerns about the trees, parking, and congestion at Memorial Park.

Bass explained that the city center is in rough shape and needs some help. Some benefits of selecting city center are that it's a blank slate, has existing utilities, walkable area of town, and proximity for seniors to visit.

Wolf remarked that there's more opportunities in city center, which is better than putting more amenities in an already congested area like Memorial Park.

Becka stated that the city center site will need considerable city action. The path of least resistance would be Sliding Hill Skate Park since it's not earmarked for anything and has existing activities. If the city wants momentum on this project, Sliding Hill Skate Park would probably be the best site.

Dohm disliked Sliding Hill Skate Park due to the noise of vehicles at the nearby intersection. She thought it felt off the road. It would have been more preferable to have the POPS located closer to the hill but it's not feasible with the flooding and drainage issues.

Planning Director Ondich said that there have been internal city staff discussions of redevelopment on the whole block of city center, which is bound by the railroad on the west side, 2nd Ave NW on the east side, 2nd St NW on the north side and Main Street on the south side.

Barten explained that the lack of a supply of parking can represent a vibrant community. People will find places to park. People may park a few blocks away, which happens frequently during Dozinky as well as the recent Calvary Church event. The Park Board could donate \$2,000 for a tree sensitive concept design, to give Memorial Park a fair ranking in this site selection discussion.

Dohm would rather pursue city center site. It's easier to imagine the layout of the site than Memorial Park.

Bass recommended that the Bolton & Menk Feasibility Study should be presented to the city council because it had some validity. The Park Board could provide their opinions to City Council to get their thoughts.

Bass liked city center the best, followed by Sliding Hill Skate Park, and then Memorial Park.

Wolf liked city center, followed by Sliding Hill Skate Park, and Memorial Park.

Barten liked Memorial Park and city center equally and then Sliding Hill Skate Park.

Becka liked city center, followed by Sliding Hill Skate Park, and Memorial Park.

Dohm liked city center, followed by Memorial Park, and Sliding Hill Skate Park.

Barten suggested that the Park Board could do a study on the revitalization of city center.

Planning Director Ondich said that it might be a good idea to add this study of city center to the Comprehensive Plan as supplemental information to support redevelopment of the area.

A motion was made by Barten, seconded by Dohm to accept the Praha Outdoor Performance Stage (POPS) Site Feasibility Study written by Bolton & Menk dated July 2023 and forward to City Council for review. Motion carried (5-0).

Dohm believed this action would encourage discussion and initial preliminary decision that the city center is viable site.

Planning Director Ondich mentioned that this will encourage the city council to think about the future of city center. It's not beneficial to keep the site vacant. Its better to either develop the site or sell the land.

Dohm stated that part of city center could be converted into a park.

Planning Director Ondich commented that in addition to Comprehensive Plans, MSA can also do conceptual studies.

Dohm stated that most public comments were against Memorial Park.

A motion was made by Barten, seconded by Dohm, to forward a general consensus of the Park Board to the City Council for consideration that the Park Board supports providing up to \$15,000 in Park Board funds, along with potential additional city funds, to develop a City Center/Central Park revitalization project master plan to accommodate the POPS facility and other potential uses such as city hall facility, commercial space and housing units. Motion carried (5-0).

6. Foundry Hill Park Improvements – ADA Route from Parking Lot to Ballfield

Planning Director Ondich explained that at the July Park Board meeting, the Park Board wanted to discuss the possibility of having an ADA accessible route to the baseball field. The City Engineer proposed creating an aggregate path from the existing trail to the ballfield and a connection from the parking lot to the existing trail. The cost of the concrete sidewalk connection is \$1,500.

A motion was made by Dohm, seconded by Bass, to recommend that the City Council amend the 2023 Park Board Budget to pay up to \$1,500 from the Park Equipment Fund for ADA route improvements at Foundry Hill Park from the parking lot to the ballfield. Motion carried (5-0).

7. Dog Park Discussion

Planner Chapman presented the dog park updates. Earlier this year, staff received fence estimates from Central Ag LLC and Town and Country Fence. Town and Country Fence

estimated that it would cost \$59,915 for a 47” high galvanized steel woven wire fence, 10 end posts, 10 corner posts, four 4’ wide walk gates, and one 12’ wide double swing gate. Central Ag LLC provided a few estimates that ranged from heights 4’-5’ and whether they utilized the existing fence on site. The cheapest estimate from Central Ag LLC was \$25,905.59. This price would include the installation of a 1760ft of 4ft tall 4 by 4 woven wire, with 4 4ft mesh galvanized gates and 2 10ft gates. If the Park Board decided to go with the cheapest fence option, the first phase of the dog park project would cost approximately \$33,155.59. The first phase of the project would include the fence, parking lot, entry area concrete, trash/recycling cans, animal waste bags dispenser, and entry/rules sign.

Wolf explained that the Dog Park Group thought it would be acceptable to install a 4’ fence and to utilize the existing fence except they were concerned about the existing fence’s barbed wire.

Dohm wondered if there were liability issues related to the barbed wire fence.

Planning Director Ondich replied that he would contact the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust to confirm.

Dohm suggested that the separation fence between the small and large dogs could be added later.

Barten proposed that the fence doesn’t have to go as far east as depicted in the dog park diagram. If the fence wasn’t extended as far east, it would allow the city better access to the northern part of their property.

A motion was made by Barten seconded by Bass to approve the idea of installing a 4’tall woven wire fence at the dog park, the fence shouldn’t be extended as far east as shown in the diagram, and that staff should check liability issues of having a barbed wire fence. Motion carried (5-0).

Becka requested to have the dog park fees summarized at the next Park Board meeting for discussion.

8. T-Mobile Hometown Grants

Planner Chapman introduced the T-Mobile Hometown grants funding opportunity. T-Mobile is offering a maximum of \$50,000 to community projects that enhance local connections such as technology upgrades, outdoor spaces, the arts, and community centers. The project would have to be completed within 12 months. More importantly, the grant could fund a new POPS facility, dog park, or pickleball courts. Applications are due on a quarterly basis and are determined 60 days after the applications have closed.

Becka asked for clarification on the timeline of the application.

Planner Chapman explained that the project work must be complete, and funding must be spent 12 months after the grant approval date. It appears that T-Mobile has this grant every year. Hypothetically we could apply later if need be.

Barten asked if the city got funding for the dog park, would it hinder POPS ability to acquire funding through the same grant.

Planning Director Ondich stated that it shouldn't be an issue. If the city wrote a grant for POPS, it would be competing against other applications.

Dohm recommended that there should be collaboration in writing the grant application to increase the likelihood of receiving the grant. The dog park group could write the grant with the city with the support of the Forward New Prague Foundation.

Barten suggested that the city could also put in matching funds to strengthen the application.

A motion was made by Barten, seconded by Wolf for the city to collaborate writing the T-Mobile grant with the dog park group to establish a dog park. Motion carried (5-0).

9. Arbor Day 2024 – Tree Giveaway/Tree Sale

Planner Chapman explained that earlier this year the city did a Tree Giveaway by providing 10"-24" tall trees to residents to celebrate Arbor Day. Each year the city must observe Arbor Day to maintain its status as a Tree City USA. At the Tree Giveaway earlier this year, many residents liked the Tree Giveaway but thought the trees were too small. SWCD is now allowing customers to preorder larger trees that range in height between 3' to 4' tall. They are offering bundles of American Plum, Bur Oak, Red Oak, Hackberry, Balsam Fir, and Techny Arborvitae. If the city does not want to celebrate Arbor Day with another Tree Giveaway next year, other cities have celebrated by doing a movie screening of the "Lorax", demonstrations on pruning/how to remove pests, environmental educational booths at city events, tree planting in the park, and volunteer events to remove invasive species in parks.

Bass liked the idea of giving away larger trees especially since many ash trees in the community will have to be removed because of the Emerald Ash Borer.

Barten inquired if there were any fees for the residents to acquire the trees or if some people didn't show at the 2023 Tree Giveaway.

Planner Chapman replied that no fees were required to participate in the event. If the city were to do a Tree Sale, the city would need a tree license or individuals would have to purchase them through SWCD. There were only two to three people out of the 41 people who preordered, who did not show up. Much of the feedback regarding the event was positive but many people wished the trees were larger.

A motion was made by Wolf, seconded by Barten to offer larger trees for next year's Tree Giveaway to celebrate Arbor Day. Motion carried (5-0).

10. Miscellaneous

- a. 2024 Budget Project Discussion** – The update was accepted and reviewed as written.
- b. Comprehensive Plan Update** – The update was accepted and reviewed as written.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 PM by order of Chair Barten.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kyra J. Chapman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kyra J. Chapman
Planner