

**MINUTES
OF THE WORK SESSION OF THE
EDINA PARK BOARD
HELD AT CITY HALL
July 8, 2014
5:30 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL -

Roll call was not taken. Park Board Members in attendance were Members Gieseke, Jones, Cella, Downing, Greene, Jacobson, McCormick, Segreto, and Steel.

Park Board Members absent were Members Deeds; Student Members Good and Johnson.

III. FRED RICHARDS PLANNING DISCUSSION – Facilitated by Kathy and Jeff Schoenbauer, Schoenbauer Consulting

Kathy and Jeff Schoenbauer from Schoenbauer Consulting informed the Park Board that after talking to City Manager Scott Neal and Ms. Kattreh they felt it would be wise to touch base with the Park Board and have a brainstorming session.

Ms. Schoenbauer explained to the Park Board what has been done to date. She indicated they want to be very cautious about getting ahead of where the public is at, they do not want to be presumptuous about anything.

Mr. Schoenbauer indicated that they had a good work session with a developer for the Pentagon Park folks and what was promising and found if nothing else there is a commonality in the aesthetics. He noted they also talked to the developer and some city staff about the idea of the parkway and what the parkway might and might not mean to folks.

Member Downing asked if they have seen any themes that are starting to come up and one thing he has heard from is they would like to see limited traffic coming from the north; so limit the parking and active uses and push those to the south. Member Jones asked does the city have any access or are there any easements on the south. Mr. Schoenbauer responded it's difficult to access the park because essentially there is a chain link fence along the whole southern border and with respect to the neighbors there is a concern about people migrating to the park through the neighborhoods. He noted that you have to provide access from a different angle that is more convenient. They will need to limit access from the neighborhood to the trails.

Member Segreto commented in reading what the residents' concerns are regarding screening she thinks there is also a flip side and that is the site lines from the park. She noted that a park for her is to feel a sense of refuge and as she stands in certain places at Fred Richards and looks out and sees the backs of houses, to her that's a negative. She pointed out that in many places in Central Park, NY, you can't even see the buildings and it's not only because of the landscaping but because of the berms, it goes both ways.

Mr. Schoenbauer stated that they know there is a demand for athletics and in talking with the neighborhoods the idea of an athletic complex per se with lights and such is not appealing and it becomes more of a challenge when you begin to look at the realities of the soils and site conditions.

Member Segreto asked how many total improvements are they talking about to which Mr. Schoenbauer replied they have 42 acres; however, probably only five to ten acres of the whole site would be suitable for active uses.

Member Segreto asked what kind of joint parking arrangements might be made with some of the industrial users so that they don't have to build parking spots. Mr. Schoenbauer replied there is definitely openness to shared parking with the developer. Member Jacobson asked if there will be enough parking to accommodate soccer games. Mr. Schoenbauer replied with the current parking lot he suspects not, but thinks with the redevelopment plan there certainly will be ample parking.

Member Jacobson asked if there are certain problem areas with the site. Mr. Schoenbauer replied with the recent heavy rains there was flooding even off the property into people's homes and apartments. He explained that the Watershed District looks at these as in their terms "poor soils" and they are easily saturated with water and they don't drain well. Member Jacobson asked is that something you will want as a soccer field. Mr. Schoenbauer responded that for the golf course it works well enough but if you were to need a level playing field probably not; however, it would probably be suitable for the little kids youth soccer games. He commented that the question will become how much to modify those soils to get to a certain level of quality.

Chair Gieseke asked what the property looked like before it was a golf course to which Mr. Schoenbauer replied his understanding is it was athletic fields. Ms. Kattreh pointed out there was a golf course that was on the west side and then the east side was your typical neighborhood park with ball fields and a play structure.

Mr. Schoenbauer asked if their understanding is correct that there is a need in terms of athletics and that it would lean towards the youth type of open fields. Member Jones pointed out in looking at the benchmarks that the National Recreation and Park Association have given, Edina could use more full sized soccer fields. She noted there are other things they could use that are even more glaring but she doesn't see this as the right space for a community center, which was a clearly stated goal in the comprehensive plan and Community Attitude and Interest Survey. In addition, according to the benchmarks, Edina could use another dog park, a competition size swimming pool, youth activity center, performing arts center and another community garden. Mr. Schoenbauer commented that community gardens have come up in a couple of different ways and it has even been taken to the next level, if you will, to an urban agricultural feature where it is not only community gardens per se but it's actually something that restaurants and such get involved with and has a stronger educational component to it.

Member Segreto informed the Park Board that there is a place in New York called "Queen's County Farm" and it sits on 42 acres (which is more than it needs) and is tended by seniors, people with disabilities and young people who are learning how things grow. It's more than a garden but less than a farm and is a place where people have weddings, there is a community space and there is a real melting pot of people. She added it also has miniature sheep and young people are learning to shear the sheep and spin the yarn.

Member McCormick commented that she thinks they need to evaluate all of the parks and what they are used for to make sure they are using this park for its best use. Maybe a community garden or that type of a facility would be better at one of the other parks that they haven't yet talked about.

Member Downing noted the survey that was done in 2006 and what struck him was that a lot of it was around nature trails, natural space and even converting some of it back to wetlands where birds come,

etc. He noted that seemed to be an overwhelming thing just from the public's perspective and since that was the last time they took the survey it strikes him as being important. Ms. Schoenbauer commented that several people have mentioned the 2006 study as well as she also looked at the 2011 and 2013 study that is on the city website. Ms. Kattreh explained that the 2006 study was something that was done by the Parks & Recreation Department and the other studies were done by the city, not focusing solely on Parks & Recreation.

Member Jones stated that it was clear people were willing to spend money for trails because trails are something that the older population is going to be looking for, as well as the younger. Mr. Schoenbauer noted that's one of the things that came up today at their team design meeting is how to treat the regional trail going through the park. They need to make sure there is no confusion between where the regional trails are and where the internal trails are to the park. That was also an expressed concern to the neighbors that the park trails don't become a defacto freeway.

Member Segreto asked what they have learned about the need for a playground somewhere to which Mr. Schoenbauer replied a play area for kids has been expressed to some degree; however, if it's anything that would create some noise that it is not placed too close to the residential area. Member Segreto stated if they decide to go down that road she would like to at least evaluate a natural playground that is a deviation from your standard playground equipment. She noted they are not as expensive as a typical playground; however, she doesn't believe it is ADA accessible and that might be an issue. Ms. Schoenbauer replied there are ways that you can address accessibility issues because it kind of depends upon how you define accessibility; they have done a lot of work on ADA projects.

Member Greene commented he was more interested in the ball fields, specifically for the sports where they are short like lacrosse and soccer. He would recommend that it be fields for the 5 to 11 year-old age range which means you won't need lights. He noted he doesn't think it needs to be built up; it's a golf course and it's irrigated. If it's raining and wet they can play the next day but it's very hard and difficult to schedule in Edina for any sports because of the shortage.

Mr. Schoenbauer asked Mr. Greene what kind of sports use he is thinking to which Mr. Greene replied there is a shortage of fields for baseball, soccer and lacrosse and those are fields for youth they don't need huge fields. Mr. Schoenbauer responded he thinks in the context of the neighborhood if it's kept more on the youth focus versus the adult focus and that everyone goes home by 8 p.m. he thinks would be supported by the neighborhood. Mr. Greene pointed out that in the 1970s that is what that area was used for.

Member Steel stated the user group she is concerned about is the 15 to 18 year-olds and the reason this location is critical to them is because the trail will connect to the high school and therefore she is thinking of it as a destination type place. There can still be athletic fields or maybe some kind of city programming where teenagers can volunteer to fix bikes. In addition, because of the high school, maybe during the winter they could cross country ski or snowshoe and maybe there could be a small warming house facility. She indicated there are not many locations that she can think of that would be good for a teenager. Member Steel noted that in talking about a new community center that was continuously an age group that came up.

Mr. Schoenbauer noted that in mentioning a warming house that gets a little bit into the repurposing of the clubhouse and asked for thoughts on that. He stated if they are able to keep it separated from the neighborhood through a good design he could see all kinds of different opportunities because at this point they are just looking at ways to maximize its flexibility.

Member Jacobson asked if they have ever thought of different uses during the winter, possibly having a trail that you can walk on during the summer and cross country ski on in the winter as well as maybe there is potential for an ice skating rink. Member Segreto commented that winter uses are pretty terrific and noted maybe a gas bonfire, like the ones restaurants have, could be incorporated. She noted the topography at Fred Richards for cross country skiing may be kind of boring. Member Steel stated she was thinking more of the trail and not the park. Mr. Schoenbauer asked if Edina plans to plow that trail to which Ms. Kattreh replied it is currently not planned to be maintained during the winter. Member Cella indicated there are going to be some areas down by the high school that will probably deal with them because the high school cross country ski teams will use it.

Member Jones talked about having a bike lending facility there and not just regular bikes but bikes that are fit for people with disabilities. Mr. Schoenbauer asked if that would be a facility that the city would manage. Member Jones responded the beauty about "Nice Ride" is that they take care of it, they are a charity group that offers it and she believes they want to expand into Edina.

Member Steel indicated she recently saw a program where youth would volunteer for a certain number of hours in a bike shop and then they would receive a bike for their work and they continue to work because they already have an investment in it. She stated it would be a great program for the 10 to 18 year-old age group. Chair Gieseke commented it could be sort of a youth center, like the DECA group at the high school and they could also help with the community garden/farm, etc.

Member Greene noted two other things that came up were first the lack of tennis courts that we have that are not cracked and the second was the sport of futsal, which is like soccer. He noted if you wanted to make your footprint smaller you could have futsal courts and tennis courts together. Mr. Schoenbauer responded that he did broach the subject of tennis courts with the Watershed District folks because they are familiar with the soils and in his own experience it would be very expensive on this site to get a tennis court not to crack.

Member Jones pointed out Edina only has one disc golf course and it's so popular that people have to wait to get on. Mr. Schoenbauer asked what they thought about the trend towards extreme golf because the green space will allow for some of those evolving activities.

Member Cella asked the Schoenbauers what their timing is for when this will be more formalized because she thinks it's silly to re-purpose Fred Richards before the Park Board finishes their assessment of the Edina park system. Mr. Schoenbauer noted in earlier discussions with Ms. Kattreh and Mr. Neal they discussed breaking up the project into logical steps so they didn't get too far ahead of what the Park Board wants to do. He explained that the first step is to basically create a story line around the repurposing of the Fred based on public interaction. He stated if he were to pick a timeline he would guess the project gets completed in the September/October time frame and by then the Park Board is moving forward with the park assessment study and you can then integrate their findings into whatever your timeframe is.

Member Downing stated he thinks that is a valid point and wants to make sure it is noted as they go through the process and steps. He indicated it's great to get the neighborhood and Park Board's opinion on what the park needs in general but what overall does Edina's parks need in general and then what is the general population's need because this belongs to the city. He stated that his own frustration as they go through this is whatever they are developing by the time November rolls around or by the time February rolls around, whenever they get the study results back, will it be flexible enough that if an overwhelming item came up would they be able to change it. Ms. Schoenbauer indicated that for the visioning process for this project and figuring out the direction for the repurposing is to have things

finalized in the October time frame. He stated to Member Downing's point what you learn in the next phase through your park system planning efforts can ducktail into this and then that would impact the next phase of this which would become the detailed master plan.

Member Segreto noted that she thinks they have to be a little sensitive about changing demographics in that part of Edina especially with the number of minorities who are living in the multiple family homes. She stated if you have an extended family that lives in one or two apartments there is a need for picnic space and we need to be sensitive to that need. Mr. Schoenbauer replied that has come out in the discussions and they are aware of that, particularly with the apartment dwellers. He noted they need to find that balance between providing for that need, which is evolving, and respecting the concerns of the joining neighborhoods.

Member McCormick asked because Cornelia School is so close is there any way to have it so that children can go between the two parks. Mr. Schoenbauer replied that issue did come up on one of their site walks.

Member Jones asked when residents and the Park Board would see a design so they could respond to it to which Mr. Schoenbauer replied he hopes to be able to go back to the neighborhood and the public in September.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.