

**MEDINA CITY COUNCIL AND PARK COMMISSION CONCURRENT WORK
SESSION MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 23, 2021**

The City Council and Park Commission of Medina, Minnesota met in work session on February 23, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Chambers. Mayor Martin presided.

Martin read a statement explaining that this meeting is being held in a virtual format because of the ongoing pandemic. She provided instructions for public participation.

I. ROLL CALL

Council Members present: Albers, Cavanaugh, DesLauriers, Martin, and Reid.

Council Members absent: None.

Park Commission Members present: Bernhardt, Hutchinson, Jacob, Morrison, Sharp, and Norman (arrived at 7:16 p.m.).

Park Commission Members absent: Lee.

Also present: City Administrator Scott Johnson, Assistant City Administrator Jodi Gallup, Finance Director Erin Barnhart, City Planning Director Dusty Finke, and Public Works Director Steve Scherer

II. DIAMOND LAKE REGIONAL TRAIL

Martin commented that this meeting is a continuation of the joint work session of the Park Commission and City Council from the previous week with Three Rivers Park District to discuss the Diamond Lake Regional Trail. She stated that the meeting tonight should focus on public comments with a meeting to follow the next week devoted to deliberation by the Council and Park Commission.

Kelly Grissman, Three Rivers Park District, provided brief overview and background on the Diamond Lake Regional Trail. She stated that they are looking to better define the route for the trail in order to acquire property for the trail segments from willing sellers and developers as it becomes available. She stated that this is envisioned as a 20-to-30-year process. She stated that a community has never regretted the recreational amenity once the trail project is completed. She noted that circumstances change over time and even the most reluctant property owner sometimes becomes a willing seller, and this planning process allows the Park District to be prepared when those opportunities arise. She provided a summary of some of the input that has been received from the public thus far both in support and opposition. She stated that the difference in feedback seems to be between the different areas of Medina and whether the property owner would be impacted. She recognized that there are challenges in developing a regional trail corridor and confirmed that there is still work to do in order to provide a route that would best meet the desires of the public. She welcomed additional input from the public related to the proposed route.

Stewart Crosby, SRF, stated that he is working with the Park District on the trail project and provided a brief overview of the routes that have been reviewed and considered along with the preferred route through Medina. He noted that the trail would run a total of 21 miles and travel through multiple communities.

Martin emphasized that the Council will not take any action in regard to a trail route but will instead listen to input on the route and possible changes that would make the route more palatable to residents. She thanked all residents that have submitted written comments. She recognized the balance between providing recreational opportunities with protecting the rural character of Medina and the privacy of its residents.

Neil Lapidus, 2200 Hollybush Road, commented that he is opposed to the regional trail western route as it comes very close to his property. He stated that he has also had the opportunity to reach five of the seven members of his neighborhood association and those members are also strongly opposed to the western segment. He stated that the property and privacy of the rural environment is important to the residents. He stated that this would now suggest that be converted to a linear trail. He commented that it is complicated to map out a linear trail and noted that unless there is abandoned property there would be too much resistance without guarantee that it could be completed. He commented that Baker Park has a complete trail system three miles from this location and therefore he did not believe it to be a wise choice to select this location. He stated that if the Park District and City are looking to enhance the park and trail system, they should look to existing trails that could be further connected and enhanced.

Abdhish Bhavsar, 2105 Chestnut Road, stated that the preferred route seems to run along his eastern property line that is currently shared with another family. He commented that he was unsure how a trail 16 feet in width would not disrupt the existing pastures. He did not think it would be fair to change horse trails into bike trails. He stated that this alignment would dramatically change the rural character of very quiet dead-end streets by significantly increasing traffic. He stated that this would also bring trail users across the property of many families and impact those around the trail. He asked that everyone consider that impact, even if it does not directly impact their property. He noted that most residents moved to Medina because of the rural character and would like to protect that right for private property to remain rural and private.

Martha Van de Ven, 1765 Medina Road, referenced the statement that this is a 30-year vision noting that she has lived in Medina for 40 years. She stated that she feels that the regional trail proposal south of Highway 55 should be no place other than along CR 19. She stated that they do not need north/south bike routes through Medina every three miles as that is a violation of the greenspace that Medina residents moved to Medina to enjoy. She believed that the regional trail should be connected to the bike trail along CR 19 and could connect to the trail in Baker Park. She did not believe additional trails are needed that close in proximity. She stated that she also submitted written comments via email prior to the meeting.

Tim Healy, 1500 Tamarack, echoed the comments of the previous speaker in that another route is not needed in Medina. He asked why additional funds would be spent when there are trails and roads available to walk and bike. He did not think another trail is needed and noted that he was concerned that if there is opposition to the west an alternate route could impact other property owners. He commented that he was not made aware of this meeting until eight days ago and asked if online comments would still be accepted.

Martin stated that there has been some confusion with the notices that were mailed but believed that the notices have been comprehensive in the number of residents reached.

She commented that additional comments could be submitted in writing if something is overlooked tonight. She noted that the Park Commission and City Council will be holding an additional meeting to further discuss the matter but will not be taking formal action tonight.

Healy asked if the residents would be notified if the proposed route is changed.

Grissman replied that if there are additional changes or opportunities to better or more thoroughly engage residents, the Park District would work hard to provide those opportunities.

Martin commented that Medina staff also works hard to update the City website with that information.

David Huart, representing Jack and Joanne Wahlfors, 1525 Deerhill Road, commented that they were made aware of the project two days ago and listened to the February 16th meeting online. He stated that the Wahlfors are in their upper 80s and are not technologically savvy and therefore were not aware of the project. He stated that the proposed route appears to enter their property in the northeast corner and take a circuitous route through their parcel. He noted that the route would go through the berry and pumpkin fields on the property. He stated that if the intention is to provide connection, that could be done along Deerhill Road rather than dissecting this property. He stated that the Wahlfors family has owned this property since the late 1800's and have many generations of labor invested in the property. He thanked Hellen Healy who spoke at the last meeting expressing concern on part of the Wahlfors. He asked that thought be given to the investment that the Wahlfors have made to their property and whether the rights of the private property owners and natural resources are greater than recreation.

Sara Welch, 1752 County Road 24, stated that in July she noticed a sign in Wayzata that said help plan the next regional trail and were surprised to see a proposed alignment that snaked through their private property. She stated that she and her husband have no interest in another trail in the area. She agreed that the trail could be routed to CR 19. She stated that her property was purchased for private use and not public use, noting that the trail goes through 12 acres of their private land. She stated that the vast majority of Medina residents are not interested in additional trails that go through greenspace and hoped that the Mayor and Council support the desires of the residents to protect Medina's greenspace.

Robin Johnson stated that she is in a unique circumstance as she owns property on Tamarack that is split between Orono and Medina. She stated that she currently operates a nonprofit farm sanctuary, and the preferred route would go through both her Medina and Orono properties. She stated that she is upset and anxious over this issue and cannot believe that a route that goes through private property is being discussed. She stated that she will not sell her property. She noted that she attended the Orono Council meeting the previous night and that Council stated that they would not run the trail through private property and said it will not consider that type of route. She stated that like everyone before her, she is opposed. She asked when the meeting would be held where the Council would say that this trail will not work.

Martin stated that the Council and Park Commission will have a meeting the following Tuesday, March 2nd to discuss the project and input received. She stated that a decision may not be made but the members would be providing their views.

Robin Johnson asked why the Orono Council stated right away that their job is to represent their residents and asked why Medina does not feel the same way.

Martin commented that the Council may reach a similar conclusion, but she believes in permitting residents of Medina the opportunity to provide their input. She commented that Orono tends to follow a top-down communication style while Medina follows an open communication style which is why the Council is providing the opportunity to listen to everyone's comments.

Quinn Montgomery, 1815 Morgan Road, commented that the Park District talked about this being a 30-year vision but noted that this would impact property values immediately. He stated that many people have said that if they would have known about this trail, they would not have purchased the property, and therefore if this alignment is out there it will be difficult to sell properties impacted. He noted that one of the routes runs through their property and it would be devastating and has stressed out his family. He stated that this puts neighbor against neighbor, as moving the alignment simply shifts that burden to other members of the community. He asked where the need for the trail comes from as the previous presentation stated that most comments were in opposition of the trail. He stated that it does not sound like there is much of a need for this solution.

Martin commented that there is a strong regional government in the metro area which includes planning for communities to grow in a coordinated fashion. She noted that the Metropolitan Council plans not only trails but other elements such as transit systems and density requirements. She stated that Medina has been brought in because the Three Rivers Park District would like to plan and collaborate with the cities in which it would like to place routes, which is how this came to be. She stated that the Council is listening tonight and not deciding anything. She thanked everyone for the comments they have provided tonight as well as through email prior to tonight's meeting.

T. Cody Turnquist, 2000 Chestnut Road, thanked the Park Commission and Council for listening to the public input. He stated that his family has lived on the property for over 40 years, noting that he and his wife recently purchased the property from his parents and hope to continue to raise their family on the property. He echoed the comments of the previous speakers. He noted that the way they run their farm on their property would be in jeopardy with this trail, as the trail would run adjacent to their horse fences and across their hay fields. He stated that when people come to his property, he has to educate them as to how to interact with livestock and he would not have the opportunity to educate members of the public that would use a trail running through his property. He commented that the aerial imagery is rather deceptive, noting that the trail segment on his property is less than 2.5 miles from 2,500 acres of property owned by the Park District. He encouraged the Park District to look at how the trail could be directed through its own property.

Kirsten Chapman, 1575 and 1535 N Willow Drive, thanked the Council for opening up this meeting to receive public input. She stated that she recently sold a property on Iroquois that would have a segment run along the property. She sympathized with the different areas within the City because the northern area is controlled development and

the southern area is large rural lots. She was unsure that there would be a good way to reconcile that difference. She stated that her biggest concern is the protection of Wolsfeld Woods. She stated that as development increases, the rules of that natural area are often violated. She commented that Wolsfeld Woods is one of the largest scientific wooded areas in this region. She believed that Three Rivers Park could use existing Medina trails to connect to other communities. She stated that she would not be opposed to segments that would run along the roads, as the roads in the southern portion of Medina are rural and would still provide that nature like feel. She suggested that if this has to move forward, it should follow existing roads. She asked that this trail stay away from Wolsfeld Woods, as an adjacent trail segment would encourage pedestrians and cyclists to go into the woods.

Tim Sedabres, 3169 Cypress Circle S, thanked the Council and Commission for the time they have put into listening and reading all of the comments. He stated that he hears the concerns from those that do not want to disturb their personal property. He referenced the population density on the east and north and stated that those residents like to walk, and bike and it can be difficult to do on the shoulder of a road. He stated that residents will benefit and use the trails. He stated that there is currently not a connection to the Baker Park trails from the east. He stated that he would support either route and believes that trail access would provide a benefit to the community.

Martin commented that persons in the more newly developed areas with younger families have a greater desire for this type of trail. She stated that perhaps the trail could run north of Highway 55 and stop around Highway 55. She recognized that people live in different settings of the City and have different desires.

Minna Brooks, 4506 Oak Drive in Edina, stated that she is not a Medina resident and is present in representation of the Brooks family that donated the land into conservancy for Wolsfeld Woods. She stated that her family opposes this route because of the impact it could have on the woods. She stated that she is sympathetic to the comments everyone has made related to their emotions and property values. She commented that ultimately conservation and natural preservation benefits everyone. She stated that she does not understand why people are having to argue to save the Earth. She stated that Wolsfeld Woods was donated with the purpose of protecting the land from development and is designated as a scientific and natural area. She stated that her family is opposed to the alignment that would run adjacent to the woods.

Bridget Anderson, 1512 Deerhill Road, stated that they moved here one year ago and feel fortunate to have found this special place in the woods. She referenced the western alignment and noted that they are opposed to that route. She stated that they are not opposed to making bike trails and connections for people to visit the great area they have found. She stated that regional trails bring a large number of users, noting that projections are often three times lower than the actual number of users. She stated that regional trails also bring cars and traffic that park on residential roads in order to access trails. She commented that Three Rivers Park District builds great trails but that should be done in the public right-of-way. She stated that if a trail must go through, it should follow public right-of-way. She suggested the Council form a task force with stakeholders, including impacted property owners, to continue to guide this process.

Rich Wallin, 2022 Medina Road, stated that they love Medina and sought this area for a specific reason, the majesty and privacy of this area. He noted that this trail would run

adjacent to their seven acres of property. He stated that while they appreciate the benefit trails provide to a community, they are opposed to this. He stated that increased trail traffic would impact dogs, horses, and the rural character that residents moved to this area to enjoy. He stated that they would support an alternate route but would not support a route in places it was not meant to exist. He stated that some neighborhoods would welcome a trail amenity while others oppose it and prefer their privacy. He recognized that this is a challenging endeavor to find a route that pleases everyone but commented that the south portion of Medina is home to many residents who moved there to have privacy. He stated that this is a tough time, and the timing could not be worse to impose additional anxiety. He asked the Council to shelve this and think of a better time when the community could come together to find a reasonable solution.

Brian Luedtke, 2650 Bantle Farm Road, stated that he also represents his neighbors. He stated that Three Rivers has not been clear in displaying this alternate route. He commented that his neighbors would abut the trail segment and are concerned with the disturbance to the wetland and wildlife. He stated that he moved to Medina to have a large piece of property and does not want a bike path in his backyard or his neighbor's yard. He suggested that Three Rivers spend the time and money enhancing trails within their own property. He stated that he has spoken with ten of the largest property owners that are not willing to sell their property and are also willing to place a clause in the sale of their property that trail easements not be provided.

Michael Fine, 550 Navajo Road, commented that he is incredibly encouraged by the thoughtfulness and well-articulated arguments from the public. He stated that he is proud to be a Medina resident. He applauded a previous comment where someone stated that they are not just opposed to this alignment but the alternate alignments that would run along private property. He agreed that this trail could run along CR 19. He strongly urged there being further review of the 40 percent of comments in support made online, noting that they may not be Medina residents. He understood that someone in the Enclave would support this amenity as something nice to have but noted that the other residents moved to Medina because they wanted large open spaces and do not want this trail along their properties. He stated that there is something available to the west and people can walk along roads, such as Medina Road, without fear of wellbeing from vehicles. He believed a thoughtful route could be developed along public roads but did not believe the western area was the right route. He stated that perhaps the comments in support are coming from the higher density residential areas. He noted that the rural Medina residents have already put up with the higher density residential areas that have come forward. He stated that if there is an urgency to connect to other communities in the north, that could be done along CR 19.

Angela Erickson stated that she represents many of the Hunter Drive residents which would be impacted by the eastern route. She stated that they felt some relief after the last call. She stated that they have joined together to keep the bike route out of Hunter Drive but have realized that they should also join together with the other residents to state that the trail is simply not wanted in the community. She stated that the Hunter Drive residents do not want this in their neighborhood but also do not wish this on other residents along other proposed routes.

Tim Schock representing his parents who live at 2075 Cottonwood Trail, commented that he is disappointed to see what has been taking place through this process. He stated that the recommended route was not even part of the original proposal prior to

February 16th. He stated that all the comments received prior to that time and the public engagement had been focused on the original corridor, therefore tonight is the first opportunity to comment on the recommended route itself. He noted that he has listened to the October 28th and February 16th meetings. He stated that the goal has been stated as a linear trail that goes through nature, noting that the first two routes were along public roads and therefore that does not make sense. He stated that it seems those routes were put out there in order to create a backlash on road-based routes in order to bring this route forward. He noted that this route would go directly through the horse pastures of his parents' property. He noted that the path would not just take 16 feet but would take the entire use of the land. He stated that his parents' property is a world-renowned equine farm. He stated that the question seems to be how this could be done rather than whether it should be done. He did not believe there has been proper consideration of the risks to the private land. He stated that most of the people on the call have been overwhelmingly opposed to this and hoped that the Council would take that into consideration.

Neil Bhavsar, 2501 Chestnut Road, stated that he has grown up in Medina and as a resident he is worried about the trail bringing in people that would otherwise not be in the backyards of Medina residents. He stated that many Medina residents own livestock and horses and having a large amount of traffic would disrupt those animals. He stated that the safety of the animals should be a part of this discussion.

Rachelle Rossini stated that Three Rivers Park District has stated that this is decades away so it does not need to be worried about but noted that it will impact property values now. She stated that the Park District also stated that they do not work with unwilling sellers but that does not mean that your neighbor may not sell. She stated that she does not want this anywhere in Medina. She stated that it was commented that the western route would only go through 14 properties, but the denser Enclave is more likely the area that would support this. She commended the Orono Council for making a statement the previous night that it would need a good reason to disrupt private property and this would be a hard no. She stated that Medina has the right to say it does not want this. She stated that she has not seen any property owner that would be impacted support this project.

Jennifer Dobbs echoed the comments made thus far. She stated that she also represents the other members of her family that own 72 contiguous acres along Morgan Road. She stated that they are opposed to the recommended trail route due to the invasion of their privacy, the disruption to wetlands and natural areas, and the threat to privacy. She stated that there are trails in Baker Park and along CR 19 that could instead be further developed. She stated that they have horses on their property, and they are not used to interacting with strangers. She noted that it would be a safety concern not only to the horses but the users of the trails. She referenced the planned local trail identified with the green dotted line and asked what that would entail and how it is related to the western route as those would be further disruptive to private property.

Finke stated that the City's trail plan has a turf trail in the designated location northwest of Morgan Road and was based on historic horse trails in the area.

Martin stated that this has been a wonderful dialogue and it has been great to hear people express their concerns respectfully. She thanked everyone for their input noting that the Council welcomes input from residents before making decisions. She stated

that the March 2nd work session will be reserved for deliberations by the Park Commission and City Council in light of the community input. She stated that additional input could be provided in writing prior to that time but public input will not be gathered during that meeting.

III. ADJOURN

Moved by Albers, seconded by Reid, to adjourn the meeting on behalf of the City Council at 7:53 p.m.

A roll call vote was performed:

*DesLauriers aye
Albers aye
Cavanaugh aye
Reid aye
Martin aye*

Motion passed unanimously.

Moved by Jacob, seconded by Morrison, to adjourn the meeting on behalf of the Park Commission at 7:54 p.m.

A roll call vote was performed:

*Norman aye
Morrison aye
Sharp aye
Bernhardt aye
Lee absent
Jacob aye
Hutchinson aye*

Motion passed unanimously.

Kathleen Martin, Mayor

Attest:

Jodi M. Gallup, City Clerk