

Medina Park Commission Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2021

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The Park Commission of Medina, Minnesota met in regular session on March 17, 2021 at 7:00 p.m., which was held virtually pursuant Minn. Stat. Sec. 13D.021. Park Commission Chair John Jacob presided.

1) Call to Order

Commissioners Present: Mary Morrison, John Jacob, Angela Bernhardt, Nila Norman, Steve Lee, Terry Sharp

Commissioners Absent: Troy Hutchinson

Also Present: Public Works Director Steve Scherer, Assistant City Administrator Jodi Gallup, Planning Director Dusty Finke

2) Additions to the Agenda: None.

3) Approval of the Minutes from:

- February 16, 2021 Meeting: Page 2, line 35, change “Wilshire Wood” to “Wolsfeld Woods”.
- February 17, 2021 Meeting: No changes.
- February 23, 2021 Meeting: No changes.
- March 2, 2021 Meeting: No changes.

A motion was made by Morrison and seconded by Lee to approve the minutes from February 16, 2021, February 17, 2021, February 23, 2021, and March 2, 2021 as amended.

A roll call vote was taken:

Park Commissioner Mary Morrison - aye

Park Commissioner Angela Bernhardt – aye

Park Commissioner Steve Lee - aye

Park Commissioner Nila Norman – aye

Park Commissioner Terry Sharp – aye

Park Commissioner John Jacob – aye

Motion passed unanimously.

4) Public Comments (on items not on the agenda): None.

5) City Council Update

Scherer and Gallup provided an update on recent City Council actions.

6) Diamond Lake Regional Trail – Process Update

Finke provided an update on the Diamond Lake Regional Trail planning process. He noted in response to public feedback with concerns about the proposed trails in the southern portion of the city, Three Rivers Park District and the City were removing those trails from

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consideration and beginning to evaluate and engage the public on a potential connection from Baker Park Reserve to the east and northern boundary of the City.

Finke noted the new public engagement period will be six weeks and will consist of online engagement activities, virtual open houses, an outdoor open house, mailings to directly affected property owners, city-wide newsletter mailing, and one-on-one meetings.

Finke asked the Park Commission for feedback to 1) confirm they are still interested in moving forward with this process; 2) confirm routes are not changing; 3) suggest changes to engagement process.

Kelly Grissman, Three Rivers Park District Director of Planning, stated Three Rivers Park District is interested in better learning the Park Commission's goals for the project, any non-starters for the project, and anything else they should be considering?

Morrison reminded the Park Commission that there was also "Option four", which was to not engage with Three Rivers Park District on a regional trail. She stated that information needs to get out to the Hamel Road residents. She asked if the proposed Hamel Road trail was off the road or in the right-of-way. She asked for clarification if the routes over Highway 55 had changed and that only one trail route would ultimately be built over Highway 55, not the two shown on the map.

Finke clarified that only one route over Highway 55 would be constructed and the two routes shown on the map are the two current options for consideration.

Stephen Shurson, Project Manager with Three Rivers Park District, stated that the route to the west over Highway 55 is slightly different than the original western route, noting the change was at the request of Council member Cavanaugh.

Shurson noted that the proposed trail along Hamel Road would be mainly located within the right-of-way but would involve a curb and separation from the roadway.

Lee stated that he would like to see a regional trail through the City of Medina. He asked if a Trail up to Chippewa Road had been considered as an option. He questioned if 6 weeks was enough time for additional public engagement. He supported all the suggested ways to engage the public on this process.

Finke commented that the trail would need to get to Chippewa, which would require engaging more properties. He noted a more direct path is more manageable to consider.

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Norman noted almost all the public comments she has heard so far has been overwhelmingly a negative response to the trail. She agreed that a trail to the north in the developments made sense. She was uncertain if our community members wanted this trail.

Grissman confirmed Norman's thoughts regarding the community's want for this trail. She noted that Three Rivers Park District is here tonight to see if the City still wants to move forward considering the comments received. She noted they are willing to put in the effort if the Medina community wants to continue to move forward. She stated they are here at our request.

Shurson noted that the overall public engagement for the trail through Medina showed 40% positive comments.

Sharp stated that he respects the negative comments from the south but noted that the Park Commission represents the whole community, so we should not forget about the residents in the northeast neighborhoods. He suggested soliciting more comments in a respectful way. He was in favor with at least looking at the opportunity for this trail route.

Scherer asked if the proposed trail along Hamel Road could go through Baker Park Reserve once it reached the park property, because that would substantially reduce the amount of property owners affected along Hamel Road.

Grissman stated they would need to do their due diligence in looking at all the options as both sides of Hamel Road have challenges.

Morrison noted it would be great to get access across Highway 55 to connect the two sides of Medina. She questioned if Three Rivers Park District would be involved with that segment.

Grissman stated that Three Rivers Park District would only partner in crossing Highway 55 if the trail had regional significance. She noted that if the trail just dead-ended at Highway 55, it would need to be a local trail.

Lee stated he supported Sharp's comments regarding the need for a trail in the northeastern part of Medina and noted the importance of getting the trail across Highway 55. He asked for confirmation that there is also a future proposed west-east regional trail on the map along Hamel Road.

Finke confirmed there is a west-east regional trail search corridor on the map along Hamel Road and noted that the City's trail map also shows a proposed city trail along Hamel Road.

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Finke suggested for the City to get a grade separated crossing over Highway 55, a partnership with a regional corridor would make the project more likely than solely city funding.

Jacob asked what scenarios Three Rivers Park District was considering if the regional trail did not go through Medina.

Grissman stated the trail could come down from Corcoran and head east to Plymouth and south down County Road 101.

Jacob pointed out the significant value of having a trail with a grade separated crossing traverse Highway 55.

Jacob asked if the comment period could be extended.

Grissman provided an overview of the timeline and stated the importance for this project to continue moving forward as the trail is also being planning in other communities with active developments with land that will need to be secured.

The Park Commission gave their general support to move forward with the additional public engagement efforts on the potential location of the trail from Baker Park Reserve down Hamel Road to the northern city boundary.

7) Hamel Athletic Club – Program Update and Ball Field Lights Grant

Hamel Athletic Club (HAC) President Andy Servi provided a program update to the Park Commission, first, noting the field improvements made to Quad # 1 field in fall 2020. He stated that HAC's enrollment for 2021 capped at 540 kids. He stated the upgrades to Quad # 1 and previously to Quad # 4 allows space between those field and the outer fence for tee-ball and coach pitch. This allows the larger grass field by the hill to remain usable for non-baseball activities and brings the younger kids closer to the other fields, restrooms, and concessions. HAC will be implementing a new strategy in 2021 to alleviate parking by scheduling 30 minutes between sessions, utilizing parking at Farmers State Bank of Hamel, and having the Majors/Minors programs to start practices at the batting cages.

Servi reviewed HAC's programing, stating the program brings in an average of 550 baseball participants a year and uses every City of Medina field in Hamel Legion Park and Hunter Lions Park. HAC's program generates approximately 14,500 park visits over the spring/summer between players and families. He noted that HAC differentiates from other leagues based on their mostly Monday through Thursday cabin friendly schedule.

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The program has always had kids ages 4-12 years old, and occasionally has kids 13-16 years old.

Servi stated that HAC's vision is to maintain a community-based youth baseball program for youth pre-K through high school. HAC plans to permanently expand the program to serve kids ages 4-18 years old (through high school), which creates an increased need for the Paul Fortin regulation baseball field for kids 14-18 years old.

HAC's vision is also to maintain a cabin-friendly schedule with minimal weekend activities, to foster a community by honoring play-with requests, maintaining coaching/teams year-over-year, and centralizing play at Hamel Legion Park. HAC encourages new kids to enter the program at all ages from 4-18 to develop all kids regardless of their skill level. HAC also provides competitive opportunities for kids seeking additional baseball. Ultimately, HAC's vision would be to consider expanding the Hamel Athletic Club beyond baseball to other activities/leagues such as soccer or pickleball.

Servi stated that the Paul Fortin Field is currently underutilized with less than one scheduled event per week due to games requiring 2.5 hours of daylight, which without lights is difficult to host on a weeknight. He noted that the Hamel Hawks often must play their games on weekends to allow games during the day, because visiting teams would have difficulty arriving at the field by 4:30 p.m. on a weeknight to warm-up and play the game before dusk.

Servi stated the addition of lights on the Paul Fortin Field would allow the field to be used on weeknights and allow for multiple practices/games per night instead of a single event.

Servi said that HAC's vision for the Paul Fortin Field would be to develop a destination for baseball players and fans, to increase the traffic to Hamel, which will hopefully add businesses to the area, and to host a 100-year celebration including a 2026 townball state tournament.

Servi said that step one for their vision is to add lights to the Paul Fortin Field, followed by step two to add seating such as a grandstand and amenities.

Servi stated that HAC and the City applied for a Hennepin County Youth Sports grant to help fund the ball field lights in November 2020, which the City was recently notified we had been rewarded a grant in the amount of \$148,490 toward the lights, which is approximately half of the overall project cost. An additional opportunity also exists to

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reduce the overall project costs by up to \$30,000 working with a former Musco sales employee, which the City will be looking into.

Servi noted that HAC has partnered with the City over the past several decades, including donating over \$228,000 in the last 10 years. HAC has obtained over \$293,490 in outside grant funds for the City of Medina, including this one. He noted in 2018 LED lights were added to the Little League field in Hamel Legion Park, which the project costs were split 1/3 Twins grant funding obtained by HAC/Medina (\$50,000), 1/3 covered by HAC (\$50,000), and 1/3 covered by Medina (\$50,000).

Servi stated that HAC has a similar proposal to light the Paul Fortin Field, with \$148,490 from the Hennepin Youth Sports grant and the remaining costs to be split evenly between HAC and the City of Medina (approximately \$75,000 each). He noted HAC has already met with the bank and arranged to finance their portion.

Lee thanked Servi for his well thought out presentation and for HAC's contributions to the park over the last several years. He questioned if the lights would be LED and downcast to not bleed into surrounding areas.

Servi confirmed these lights would be LED downcast lights similar to the lights on the current lighted Little League Field. He noted there are cheaper lights out there, but this proposal is for high quality lights because it is important to HAC and Medina to have LED downcast lights.

Lee reviewed the funding sources from the materials in the Park Commission packet and noted the lights should be funded from the Park Dedication fund since this project is a new improvement to the field. It was also noted the Park Dedication fund balance has enough funds at \$1,669,214, and the municipal park fund is still growing with \$379,193 in that account.

Lee asked if HAC would be looking for a financial partnership with the City on building the grandstand in a future year.

Servi confirmed that HAC would be looking for funding partnerships when they were ready to proceed with that phase of the vision.

Norman thanked Servi for his presentation and noted it was great to hear about HAC's program in the community.

Sharp thanked Servi for their hard work and noted it was great to be a partner with HAC.

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Jacob asked how much the Paul Fortin field would be used once the lights were installed. Servi stated the field would be able to be used four nights a week and one to two times on weekends with the season running from May 1 to mid-August each year. Additionally, there may be opportunity for a fall ball league.

Morrison asked how many kids in the program were from the City of Medina.

Servi stated that 20% of their kids are from Medina, which is an accurate representation of Medina when comparing the population of Medina to surrounding areas included in the program such as the Wayzata and Rockford school districts.

A motion was made by Lee and seconded by Sharp to recommend to the City Council to partner with the Hamel Athletic Club on the installation of ballfield lights on the Paul Fortin field utilizing up to \$75,000 in Park Dedication funds.

A roll call vote was taken:

Park Commissioner Mary Morrison - nay

Park Commissioner Angela Bernhardt – aye

Park Commissioner Steve Lee - aye

Park Commissioner Nila Norman – aye

Park Commissioner Terry Sharp – aye

Park Commissioner John Jacob – aye

Motion passed 5-1.

8) Staff Report

- General Items – Scherer noted he has been working with a group of Boy Scouts to help with the reforestation efforts at Harriot's Woods in the Enclave neighborhood.

9) Adjourn

A motion was made by Sharp, seconded by Lee, to adjourn the meeting.

A roll call vote was taken:

Park Commissioner Mary Morrison - aye

Park Commissioner Angela Bernhardt – aye

Park Commissioner Steve Lee - aye

Park Commissioner Nila Norman – aye

Park Commissioner Terry Sharp – aye

Park Commissioner John Jacob – aye

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m. Minutes prepared by Jodi Gallup.