

Medina Park Commission Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2021

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The Park Commission of Medina, Minnesota met in regular session on May 19, 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, Troy Hutchinson
Youth Members Present: Emily Jans and Katya Cavanaugh
Commissioners Absent: None
Also Present: Public Works Director Steve Scherer, Assistant City Administrator Jodi Gallup, Planning Director Dusty Finke, Councilmember Joe Cavanaugh

2) Additions to the Agenda: None.

3) Approval of the Minutes from:

- March 17, 2021 Meeting: No changes.

A motion was made by Sharp and seconded by Morrison to approve the minutes from March 17, 2021 as presented.

A roll call vote was taken:

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

Motion passed unanimously.

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

5) City Council Update

Cavanaugh provided an update on recent City Council actions.

6) Diamond Lake Regional Trail Master Plan

Finke stated that tonight the Commission will review a potential route through Medina for the Diamond Lake Regional Trail (DLRT). He reviewed background information on the DLRT and the engagement that has occurred over the past year as part of the Master Plan process. He noted that the Park Commission and City Council did not support the route proposed through the southern portion of Medina and requested engagement on an alternative route that would connect the DLRT to Baker Park. He noted that the Council has stated that they would not support the use of eminent domain and trail corridor acquisition would need to occur with willing sellers or through park dedication over time. He provided details on the two options that would connect from the northern city boundary to Hamel Road and noted that a summary of the reports from the engagement completed was included in the Commission packet for review. He stated that the intent tonight is to gain a recommendation from the Commission and present that to the Council at its June 1st meeting. He noted that Three Rivers Park District intends to move forward on its DLRT planning process, either with a recommended route through Medina or by working with neighboring communities and bypassing Medina. He introduced the members of the Three Rivers Park District team present at the meeting tonight.

Stephen Shurson, Three Rivers Park District Project Manager, displayed a map showing two trail options coming from Corcoran and through the northern portion of Medina, connecting to Baker Park, into Orono, continuing through Long Lake, and connecting through Wayzata.

Stewart Crosby, SRF, reviewed the existing condition of Hamel Road and noted that the preferred trail option would be to have a back of curb trail which would remain within the right-of-way. He stated that in situations where the ditch is steep, there are wetlands or other challenges, the trail could be placed on the outside of the ditch. He stated that sometimes in those instances a permanent easement could be needed. He stated that Hamel Road provides a lot of opportunities but also has challenges. He provided additional details on the different route options, challenges, and design elements that would come along with those routes.

Shurson stated that the public engagement process ran a course of about seven weeks and reviewed the different methods that were utilized in attempt to solicit the most input from the public. He stated that there were two in person open house sessions at Fields of Medina Park and Baker Park along with three virtual meetings. He provided details on the input received through the interactive map option, noting that there was generally more support for the route north of Highway 55 and more opposition as it moved along Hamel Road. He stated that for those opposed to the trail, the majority of the concern centered on a concern with a loss of privacy and perceived loss of security. He stated that for those that supported the trail, the main theme related to connectivity and the opportunity to have a safe crossing of Highway 55. He noted that engagement support was evenly split between the two routes. He summarized that the majority of Hamel Road property owners were opposed to the trail while those that lived further from Hamel Road were very supportive because they desire that connectivity. He noted that the decision would be of the City as to whether it wants to move forward with the project. He stated that if Medina does not want to move forward, Three Rivers Park District will continue to move forward, working with other communities.

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Jacob thanked the members present from Three Rivers Park District, Finke and the members of the public that have been involved in the engagement throughout this process. He stated that the Commission has been provided with copies of all the comments received thus far and therefore those comments do not need to be repeated tonight. He welcomed any additional comments that residents may have tonight.

Doug Dunlay, 4292 Arrowhead Drive, thanked the City and Park District for engaging the public and providing the opportunity for input. He stated that currently there are two options proposed, noting that the eastern route would impact his property along with many of his neighbors. He stated that the route comes through his yard, clips his garage, and comes down his driveway which would be a huge impact. He asked that the Commission not support that route. He stated that if the eastern route is chosen, that should run along Meander Road rather than crossing private property and impacting wetlands. He stated that he is not against a bike path but believed the least impactful route to landowners, privacy and the wetlands should be found at the most economical and feasible manner.

Finke commented that the long-range planning of the project was discussed and in areas of the city that have been identified for future development, exact routes were not necessarily identified but rather general location which could be worked into future potential development. He noted that in those instances the trail would be part of a subdivision request and received through park dedication.

Chris Blattner, 3085 Hamel Road, commented that he has a huge concern with the posted graphic related to the number of people that supported and opposed the trail. He stated that there were probably a lot of votes from individuals that live within a subdivision and do not have direct impacts. He explained that he, and many of his neighbors, purchased their land because of their desire for privacy and have concern with a trail running through the area.

Dan Strand, 1985 Hamel Road, stated that he has many concerns. He stated that at the March 17th meeting there was a statement made that the route to the west was slightly different than the original western route and asked the reason that route was changed. He stated that it was mentioned that Cavanaugh requested that change and asked which properties were involved.

Shurson commented that he believed the change was made around the Tamarack Drive area in order to better align with the planned City streets north of Highway 55. He stated that the lines should be considered conceptual and flexible as there is the potential for future development which would provide opportunity to obtain trails. He stated that they also eliminated the route along 116.

Finke stated that early on in the process there were three potential crossings of Highway 55 and as the process moved forward the potential Arrowhead crossing was moved further west because of the topography of the location.

Strand stated that there has been a lot of work put into this process but there is a horse trail down Hamel Road for community use. He asked where the drainage from the trail would be

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routed. He referenced the cost for the trail and asked where the funds would come from to construct the trail. He noted that an overpass is expensive as are impacts to wetlands. He recognized the anticipated schedule to move forward to the Council in June but believed that is premature. He stated that he does not support a trail that would come through this property. He asked how many members of the city would use the trail versus those from outside Medina.

Mark Lamberty, 4250 Arrowhead Drive, stated that the eastern route would directly impact their property. He stated that there is already a bike path on their property. He asked why Meander Road to Arrowhead Drive would not be considered as a viable option rather than crossing private properties and wetlands. He stated that the property owners have expressed opposition and therefore was unsure how this could be a viable route when there are not willing sellers.

Tracey Lamberty commented that there are bikers using the roadway/path every day and evening. She asked why those bikers would not continue to be served with a path that would provide safety to both the bikers and drivers.

Mr. Blattner commented that he did not believe the bikers would use the trails as they continue to use the roadways even when there are trails available.

Mr. Lamberty asked and received confirmation that the emails he submitted were included and distributed to the members of the Commission. He stated that there is a park at the end of the road that they have allowed the City to access through their property for maintenance, even though it is a no maintenance park. He stated that he would have no desire to continue to allow that access if this route is approved.

Lee stated if the City were to approve the trail corridor, could it then find itself in a situation where the park district decided to move the corridor outside of Medina because of the challenges that exist on the routes.

Shurson stated that if Medina approves a route, the park district would be committed to it and would not come back at a future date stating it is not feasible. He stated that they understand there are challenges, but those challenges are not insurmountable.

Lee stated that he agrees with the concept that existing trails and pathways should be used where they already exist rather than going through private property. He stated that for a long time the City has tried to find a way to connect both north and south and east and west through more than just driving and it has been a struggle. He stated that conceptually everyone supports the concept but when it comes close to someone's home their opinion is changed. He commented that the park district is willing to help the City build a trail and a safe crossing to get over Highway 55. He stated that if the City chooses not to move forward, it will miss the opportunity to connect the north and south and east to west and that would be a terrible missed opportunity. He noted that cost would then fall solely to the residents of Medina in the future. He commented that the residents in the north have felt somewhat isolated and therefore he is attempting to best solve that dilemma.

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Sharp stated that one role of the Commission is to make trails and parks accessible to all residents of Medina. He stated that it is tough to meet the wants and needs of all and he greatly respects the residents along Hamel Road. He commented that there will be a lost opportunity for the City and future generations of residents if Three Rivers chooses to bypass Medina. He stated that people come to Minnesota because of the parks and trails, both neighborhood and regional, and if those are not accessible that is a lost opportunity.

Bernhardt stated that she has appreciated the openness and number of meetings to allow public input. She stated that she is ready to make a decision but is not sure it fits with the comments of the previous two Commission members.

Norman stated that she has found it interesting and fun to see the members of the public participate throughout the engagement process. She stated that the role of the Commission is to think about both the present and future residents of the community. She stated that 30 years from now she cannot predict what the landscape will look like but is certain it will involve people wanting to be outside and enjoying the environment. She stated that she agrees more with the previous Commission member in the overall sentiment and commented that she is heavily weighing the disruption that would be caused to those along Hamel Road.

Hutchinson stated that he has lived in Medina for over 12 years on Lake Independence, therefore he is not unfamiliar with all that comes with having property that abuts public space. He stated that as a lakeshore property owner, the lake is shared with those from the public that use the lake in both the summer and winter months. He stated that they have consistently seen through the different proposals that those that live along the search corridors provide the feedback and express that they do not want something in their backyard. He noted that is a common theme with development and other public projects. He stated that part of the draw in moving to Medina was the proximity of the neighborhood to the trail system and Baker Park. He stated that is something that should be highly valued and treasured by the community. He stated that Three Rivers Park District has skilled staff members with a tremendous amount of past experience and education and are objective in how they look at this. He explained that the desire is to build public trails that are accessible to all for the public good. He stated that he places value on the suggestions, studies, and proposals from the Park District. He stated that he does support the work that has been done by the Park District and supports the proposal.

Morrison stated that she is strongly opposed to placing the trail down Hamel Road as she does not see why that route is more suitable than others that were eliminated (Tamarack and Hunter). She stated that Hamel Road is narrow with bad sightlines and the trail impedes the rural properties on which it would run adjacent. She stated that she senses that the desire is for the crossing over Highway 55 and believed there is a solution that can provide that without impeding Hamel Road. She noted that the timeline has been stated as 20 to 30 years and did not believe Medina could wait that long to obtain the safe crossing for Highway 55 and therefore this would not provide a solution for the connection issue Medina already has. She did not believe that it would make sense that Hamel Road would become the sacrificial neighborhood because everyone else has already objected. She believed that the City is

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chasing the money opportunity without supporting what is ultimately best for Medina and its residents and therefore would not support this moving forward.

Jans commented that she appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback. She stated that she agrees that this trail would be an opportunity and asset to future generations and would allow more people to enjoy the rural character of Medina. She asked how the environmental concerns would differ between the two routes and how impacts to the environment would be mitigated.

Shurson commented that he believed there were more wetlands to be crossed on the west option compared to the east. He explained that they build boardwalks elevated above the surface of wetlands which still allows for vegetation to grow and animal life to pass under the boardwalks. He stated that boardwalks are also constructed in the winter in order to minimize disruption. He noted that they would also work with the local Watershed District to ensure the proper methods are followed.

Crosby commented that the western route has roughly 1,100 feet of linear wetland while the eastern route has upwards of 1,600 linear feet, which would place the eastern route as the route with more wetland area.

Cavanaugh commented that she would support a trail going through that area because it would be great to share the natural beauty of Medina with residents and others. She stated that it would also be great to have a safe pedestrian crossing over Highway 55.

Jacob commented that this project and undertaking has exposed a lot of interesting challenges and the differences in opinion between the residents in the north and south and whether residents would be directly impacted by the trail. He stated that it is important to preserve the rural character of Medina as that is the reason most residents moved to Medina. He thanked Three Rivers Park District and its planning team for the work and effort that has gone into this. He recognized that there are a lot of details that would be involved in making the project a success but there does not seem to be a large amount of support for this and therefore he would not be supporting this trail. He recognized that the ultimate decision would be of the City Council.

Lee thanked everyone that has provided comments and questions throughout this process, recognizing the time that everyone has put into this consideration. He asked if Medina were to move forward, would this be a timeline of 20 to 30 years.

Kelly Grissman, Three Rivers Park District, commented that the trails proposed from Hamel Road north would fall under a sooner timeframe. She stated that the Park District looks for any opportunity to coordinate with other projects and willing sellers. She stated that once property becomes available, they work to secure that. She believed there is more opportunity to do that in the northern portion of Medina where properties will be developing, and roads are still be configured. She stated that getting an overpass over Highway 55 would be a challenge but beginning those conversations sooner would help to make it a more successful project. She stated that as Medina continues to develop, it would make for a more

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competitive and easily fundable project. She commented that work could happen in the next seven to 10 years, whereas the Hamel segment would fall under 10 to 30 years and would be based on opportunities and whether additional right-of-way would be needed. She stated that the Park District only uses eminent domain when a community requests and supports that and Medina has stated that it does not support that option therefore the timing would be based on when opportunities present themselves.

Lee asked if Scherer has any comments related to the overpass.

Scherer stated that he has no comment.

Lee referenced the comment that was made that Hamel Road was chosen by default because of the opposition expressed by other residents. He stated that Hamel Road provided access to people north of Highway 55 to Baker Park, which the City currently does not offer and something the other alignments did not provide. He thanked the youth members for their input tonight.

Morrison commented that she feels that Medina is committed to its rural character and to force rural landowners to have a trail near their livestock would not seem appropriate. She acknowledged the point that this would connect to Baker Park but there would be options through Corcoran that could provide that connection as well.

Mr. Lane referenced the question that was raised in respect to alternative trail options and reminded the Commission that there is a paved trail from the north in Corcoran, across Highway 55, through Loretto and into Baker Park which was paid for and constructed by Three Rivers Park District. He stated that while it might be fine to have a pedestrian overpass included in the long-range planning, there is access from the north to Baker Park.

A motion was made by Morrison and seconded by Norman to recommend that the City not support a Diamond Lake Regional Trail route through Medina at this time.

A roll call vote was taken:

Lee nay

Sharp nay

Bernhardt aye

Norman aye

Hutchinson nay

Morrison aye

Jacob aye

Motion passed 4-3.

Finke commented that the intent is to present this recommendation to the City Council at the June 1st meeting.

7) James and Meliss Korin – Pioneer Trail Preserve – 2325 Pioneer Trail – Park Dedication Review

Finke presented a subdivision request for 2325 Pioneer Trail which would create three rural lots on the 40-acre site. He stated that there is one house under construction on the property, which is allowed and noted that home would fall under lot one if the request is ultimately approved. He stated that the property does not have frontage on Pioneer Trail and would receive access through an easement on the property to the east. He stated that the City would have the option to request 10 percent of the buildable land, cash in lieu, or a combination of the two. He noted that there are no park or trail improvements identified in this area and therefore staff recommends cash in lieu to satisfy park dedication in the amount of \$16,000.

Morrison asked if the cash in lieu would be made available to develop trails or whether it could only be used for parks.

Finke confirmed that the funds would be available for trail construction, noting that most of the trails in Medina are constructed using park dedication fees.

The Commissioners all agreed with the recommendation of cash in lieu to satisfy park dedication.

A motion was made by Lee and seconded by Sharp to recommend cash in lieu of land in the amount of \$16,000 to satisfy park dedication requirements for the Pioneer Trail Preserve Plat.

A roll call vote was taken:

<i>Lee</i>	<i>aye</i>
<i>Sharp</i>	<i>aye</i>
<i>Bernhardt</i>	<i>aye</i>
<i>Norman</i>	<i>aye</i>
<i>Hutchinson</i>	<i>absent</i>
<i>Morrison</i>	<i>aye</i>
<i>Jacob</i>	<i>aye</i>

Motion passed unanimously.

8) Staff Report

General Items – Gallup stated that the City Council has been discussing a return to in person

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meetings and noted that the tentative plan would be to return to in person meetings in July. She asked for input on whether a park tour would be desired for July. She noted that typically the Commission completes that in May but postponed that because of the discussion tonight and concerns with COVID. She stated that if a park tour is desired, she would suggest an alternate date other than the regular meeting night. She stated that she will poll the Commission members to determine the best date.

Jacob noted that if each member of the Commission could visit their assigned park, an alternative would be for the group to provide updates on the status of each of the parks.

Cavanaugh asked whether youth members are also assigned a park.

Gallup confirmed that the members of the Commission have been assigned multiple parks and therefore she will let youth members choose a park which would lessen the load of the Commission. She stated that she will follow up with the youth members to determine which parks they would like.

Scherer reported that the ballfield lighting installation contract was awarded by the Council the previous night and estimated that the lights would be delivered in about three weeks and perhaps the goal to have the lights up and running before the end of the season could be reached. He stated that the Public Works crew has been working on the Arrowhead Drive trail connection near Loram and provided an update, anticipating that would be completed in the next month.

Jacob asked when the adjacent project in Plymouth at Medina Road and 101 would be completed as that impacted traffic.

Scherer replied that project was only three days and was completed. He recognized that the road parking is very active during baseball games. He stated that he encouraged HAC to tell their members to use the overflow parking rather than the roadway.

Lee asked if there is an update for Hunter Lions Park.

Scherer provided an update on that planning process, noting that they are working on the grading for the pickleball courts to ensure there would not be drainage problems for the neighboring properties.

Morrison stated that she has received questions from horseback riders north of 24 related to dedicated horse trails and when trails would be constructed. She asked that the Commission also review the trails in addition to their assigned parks.

Scherer stated that there is no real update other than that staff needs to walk through the Deer Hill development to determine where that will be placed. He

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stated that the trailhead for the Marx property has not yet been established. He also provided an update on a recent tree planting event in coordination with local Scouts noting that approximately 380 trees were planted.

9) Adjourn

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

A roll call vote was taken:

<i>Lee</i>	<i>aye</i>
<i>Sharp</i>	<i>aye</i>
<i>Bernhardt</i>	<i>aye</i>
<i>Norman</i>	<i>aye</i>
<i>Hutchinson</i>	<i>absent</i>
<i>Morrison</i>	<i>aye</i>
<i>Jacob</i>	<i>aye</i>

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.