

**EAST GRAND RAPIDS
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
EGR COMMUNITY CENTER
COMMISSION CHAMBERS
6:00 PM
MONDAY, April 12, 2021**

The regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was held in the City Commission Chambers in the East Grand Rapids Community Center.

Carol Campbell called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Present in Person: Nick Abraham, Adam Rogalski and Abby Sorota
Present Virtually: John Arendshorst, Carol Campbell, Kate DeVries, Larry Fisher and Aaron Smith
Absent: Liz Mitchell
Also Present: Shannyn Fasbender, Diane Ritzke, City Manager, Shea Charles and Assistant City Manager, Doug LaFave

Public Comment:

None

Report of Commissioners:

Nick Abraham – None

Adam Rogalski – Reported he has heard positive comments from neighbors and community members regarding the installation of the Bike Repair Stations, Water Filling Station and Wayfinding Signages. Thanked the Community Foundation, the City and City staff for getting these items and installing them.

Abby Sorota - Reported she is the new Commissioner appointed by the EGR School Board and is replacing Mark Hessler. She is excited to be on the Commission.

Larry Fisher – Reported he is working with the Community Foundation planning the TrailBlazer event for July 4th. The Committee is hoping the event will be held this year.

John Arendshorst – Reported the Community Engagement and Feedback Session held at Manhattan Park on March 30th was very successful. There were both negative and positive comments.

Kate DeVries – Welcomed Abby Sorota to the Commission.

Aaron Smith – None

Carol Campbell – None

Minutes for the January 11, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting were presented for approval. A motion was made to approve the minutes for the January 11, 2021 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.

MOTION: Larry Fisher

SUPPORT: Kate Devries

YES: Abraham, Arendshorst, Campbell, DeVries, Fisher, Rogalski, Smith, Sorota (8)

The Special Event Calendar for 2021 was reviewed.

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Manhattan Park Multi Use Trail Project:

Interim Director Shannyn Fasbender requested the Parks and Recreation Commission consider recommending the Manhattan Park Multi-Use Trail project concept to the City Commission with final design, trail construction/maintenance partnership agreement and budget to be considered in the future.

Shannyn reported the Community Recreation Five-Year Master Plan provides for considering improvements for Manhattan Recreation Area for improvements and construction of Multi-Use Trails within the capital improvement schedule. This capital project was identified as the second highest priority in the Master Plan. The City will consider partnering with the West Michigan Mountain Bike Alliance (WMMBA) to add new mountain bike and multi-use trails to construct, renovate and improve the existing trail system with connections to the Reeds Lake Trail. Development and maintenance of the trail will also provide for mitigation of invasive species in the area by removing them from the selected areas along the trail. To date the City has completed a Community outreach and feedback session with Manhattan Park neighbors on March 30, 2021 and FAQ's from feedback will be added to the City's Manhattan Park Development section on the website.

Copies of Communication regarding the Manhattan Park Multi Use Trails received by the City Manager's office as of April 11th was forwarded to the Parks and Recreation Commission to review.

Commissioners' discussion included:

Carol Campbell commented Shannyn mentioned the West Michigan Mountain Bike Alliance (WMMBA) might partner on this project? If they do not partner is there any other partnerships interested? Shannyn responded there are no other partnerships being considered at this time and the WMMBA is being considered as a likely partner depending on approval.

Larry Fisher inquired if the WMMBA is a company or a club organization? Shannyn responded it is a club organization. He asked what are the benefits of partnering with this organization? Shannyn responded they have worked on many trails in the area and even though the Manhattan Multi Use trails will not be a destination trail as most longer courses (10-15 miles) are, they are excited to partner with the City on this project. The trails at Manhattan will be more for kids who want to get into mountain biking or for our Cross-Country teams to be able to practice or maybe even host a cross country meet.

Aaron Smith commented he has a long history with the WMMBA and had discussions earlier in the day with Shannyn Fasbender, Carol Campbell and City Attorney, John Huff about his relationship with the WMMBA. He responded to Larry Fishers' question on the type of organization the WMMBA is and reported it is a Michigan Non-Profit Corporation 501c3 and a local affiliate of the International Mountain Bicycling Association of Michigan. He reported the WMMBA maintains and develops approximately 150 miles of trails in West Michigan. He has been involved in the past with the organization as an officer, board member, and a lawyer and although he is not actively involved in this project, he may abstain from the vote tonight because of his relationship with this organization. He wanted the Commission to be aware of his involvement with this organization.

Kate DeVries inquired whether mountain biking is allowed now at Manhattan Park and is the City currently maintaining the trails and how will they be maintained in the future? Shannyn responded the plan is WMMBA will design and maintain the trails. Mountain biking is allowed in the Park, currently the trails are not designed or safe for biking or running.

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John Arendshorst commented he has been on the trail at Manhattan on a bike, currently he feels they are incredibly difficult at this time. He does not believe they are maintained at this time and he feels they are almost unusable for mountain biking. He has been on other trails that the WMMBA has maintained and has found them to be accessible, useable, and well maintained.

Carol Campbell asked for a motion on this item before further discussion.

A motion was made to recommend the Manhattan Park Multi-Use Trail project concept to the City Commission with final design, trail construction/maintenance partnership agreement and budget to be considered in the future.

MOTION: Kate Devries

SUPPORT: Larry Fisher

The Commission continued discussion on the Manhattan Park Multi-Use Trail Project.

Larry Fisher asked Shannyn to discuss some of the concerns expressed by Community members. Shannyn responded one of the biggest concerns is whether the walkers, runners and hikers on the trail would be overtaken by mountain bikers either by racing by them or just coming up on them suddenly. She said she hopes with education by mountain bike groups by teaching members trail etiquette and with signage along the trails this will address this concern.

Nick Abraham inquired how wide the trail would be. Shannyn responded at this point she was unsure and asked Brian Miller, community member and trail advocate, if he knew the width and he responded he was unsure as well, but he thought it would be a single-track trail.

Larry Fisher commented in the past when he worked on the Cross-Country trails the width varied from anywhere from three to six feet.

Adam Rogalski commented that in late November 2020 he and his family visited Luton Park in Rockford and the MWWBA was out at the park on a Sunday afternoon maintaining the trail with approximately 12 volunteers. He also noted on the MWWBA reaches out via social media advocating for folks to stay off trails when conditions are not right. He said he is impressed with the organization's level of communication and commitment. Regarding the option of a Cross Country course at Manhattan he asked if there would be a commitment that this trail could be designed as an official course for High School competition. Larry Fisher responded that the high school Cross Country coach was at the March 30th meeting at Manhattan and his hopes were that with the new trail he would be able to host smaller meets.

Kate DeVries commented on safety aspects of the trail. She wonders if hikers will feel more confident and comfortable on trails that are better maintained by not worrying about tripping over tree roots, slippery trails and not worrying about erosion along the trail, she is hopeful having the trails maintained will lead to safer trails for the users. She asked about if the option of having different levels of difficulty for trail users. Shannyn answered there is a possibility of different levels of difficulty for trail users, however, this will be decided later as the plans are further developed.

Nick Abraham inquired what is the timetable for these trails. Doug LaFave, Assistant City Manager replied the Parks and Recreation Commission will be recommending the project concept to the City Commission. Depending on budget and fundraising, construction could begin as early as late summer or fall of this year.

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Aaron Smith commented on the width of the trail and on levels of difficulty of the trail. He said although he is not a trail designer, typically the width of the trail varies, the tread of the trail (main part of the trail) could be anywhere from 18 to 36 inches wide, then there is the corridor of the trail which could be five feet or wider. He also commented on options for levels of difficulty on the course, these are usually looped or stacked courses with the easier course being closer to the trailhead. Manhattan probably would have room for two loops.

Carol Campbell thanked Diane Ritzke for sending out the e-mail communications received by the City Manager's office for review.

Aaron Smith commented one of the concerns expressed at the Community Engagement Session on March 30th was increased traffic at the Park, which he felt was a legitimate concern. He asked Brian Miller to speak on that. Brian re-iterated what Shannyn Fasbender said earlier that this is not a destination mountain bike trail as those are typically longer courses (10 miles or more). Because the multi-use trail at Manhattan is a shorter course it will primarily be used by the East Grand Rapids community.

Tanya Vandenberg and Aaron Louisell, 947 Lakeside Dr. SE, EGR, MI, were present in support of the Multi-Use Trail at Manhattan Park.

Carol Campbell asked the Parks and Recreation Commission to vote on the motion listed above.

YES: Abraham, Arendshorst, Campbell, DeVries, Fisher, Rogalski and Sorota (7)

ABSTAIN: Smith (1)

NO: (0)

Report of Director

Interim Director Shannyn Fasbender reported on the following:

- **Middle School Sports Covid Testing:** Covid testing started today for participants in our sports program for ages 13-19. Everything went well.
- **Outdoor Restrooms:** All outdoor restrooms are open.
- **Summer Program Guide:** The 2021 Summer Parks and Recreation Program Guide is online, we will begin registration for residents on Thursday, April 15, 2021.
- **Wayfinding Signs and Posts:** The new wayfinding signs and posts are installed. The stencils will be put down in the next few weeks.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:38pm.