

**EAST GRAND RAPIDS
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
EGR COMMUNITY CENTER
COMMISSION CHAMBERS
6:00 PM
Monday, October 23, 2023**

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

Kate Skaggs called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

Present in Person: John Arendshorst, Michelle Brown, Larry Fisher, Lauren Jacoby, Patrick Parkes, Bill Saxton, Kate Skaggs and Abby Sorota

Absent: Nick Abraham

Also Present: City Manager Shea Charles, Parks and Recreation Director Derek Melville and Sara Coffey

Guests: Chris Meyer

Public Comment:

Chris Meyer, 350 Manhattan Road, East Grand Rapids. He, along with his wife, Allison, wrote a letter (Director Melville will forward to Commissioners), that thanked the city for revision of Manhattan Park designs. "Nuisance noise" is still a lingering issue due to the proposed pickle ball. Mr. and Mrs. Meyer are requesting the city pause, get a noise analysis, and re-evaluate the current noise ordinance before continuing with changes to Manhattan Park. They support the playground renovation, but believe the current shelter and restrooms are fine and no additional restrooms are needed.

Report of Commissioners:

Patrick Parkes – Nothing.

Abby Sorota – Looking forward to Election Day, would like people to get out and vote; the High School remodel is on the ballot.

Lauren Jacoby – Nothing.

John Arendshorst - Nothing.

Michelle Brown – Nothing.

Bill Saxton – Nothing.

Larry Fisher – Nothing.

Kate Skaggs- Stated that it is “joyful” to see kids staying after school to play at Wealthy Elementary. Families are connecting here.

Review of minutes:

Minutes of the September 25, 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting were presented for approval.

Sorota: Name was placed in error on the approval of special events, was not in attendance.

Arendshorst: Wasn't in attendance either, and name is on approval of special event.

MOTION to approve amended minutes: Jacoby

SUPPORT: Parkes

YES: Arendshorst, Brown, Fisher, Jacoby, Parkes, Saxton, Skaggs and Sorota (7)

NO: (0)

MINUTES APPROVED

Special Event Calendar – FYI

Manhattan Park Improvement Project Update:

Director Melville reviewed the process of the Manhattan Park improvements. Public input surveys from June received 550 responses. The results showed the number one amenity for Manhattan Park is a new playground, followed by tennis and pickle ball courts. The suggestion of a splash pad was pretty even with wanting it or not.

The second round of community engagement identified Waterfront Park as a potential location for a splash pad. The results of the survey from the second round of input were pretty similar to the results of the previous school playground surveys.

The projected cost of the three designs for Manhattan Parks came in higher than expected. The current focus now is which designs match our budget. Also looking at ways to make space between pickleball courts and houses that border the park. Looking at renovating the current pavilion by stripping it down to the bare wood, a new roof and adding lights. The design firm needs direction. A public meeting is set for October 24.

Charles: The City Commission is being asked to choose between concepts A, B, C or go back to the drawing board.

Arendshorst: Is the current pavilion short?

Melville: I will check the height and let you know.

Saxton: Wondered what flexibility the city has to increase funds?

Charles: Money can be re-allocated.

Brown: How much more time would our current pavilion last versus a new one?

Melville: The current pavilion is in good shape and should hold up for years to come.

Brown: What percent of the playground equipment will be for ages five and under versus for older kids?

Melville: Not sure yet, ideally there would be areas for all kids to play.

Brown: Feels younger kids would need this playground more since the schools are geared towards children five and up.

Sorota: Asked if the existing restrooms will be renovated?

Melville: It can be considered, but this is not allocated at this time.

Sorota: Mentioned It would be useful to have a restroom by the playground and pavilion so people won't need to go all the way to the current restrooms.

Jacoby: Agrees with the need for a second restroom closer to the playground. Feels these restrooms could get quite a bit of use between the pavilion, playground, and new trails.

Saxton: Is on board with a more central restroom at Manhattan Park. Who can approve this?

Charles: Feedback from community, Commission members and staff is provided to the City Commission will need to make the final decision. This will need to be done soon to start construction in 2024.

Brown: Is also pro-restroom, especially with a new playground. It would also be beneficial for people that can't make it over to the other restroom easily.

Skaggs: Stated she feels like the community is "missing out on a once in a generation opportunity" and feels that the city would be "diluting the amenities" by spreading them out. Voiced concerns of having a splash pad at Waterfront Park because of the busy road, the busy trail, and the proximity to the lake. Questioned if pickleball courts could be put at Waterfront Park instead of Manhattan.

Melville: Waterfront Park for pickleball hasn't come up on the survey results.

Skaggs: Original proposal showed more shade and sightlines. The current plans don't show much transformational thinking for "that wow-factor" and would like to see the city "using space to its full potential while respecting the park". She feels like the city and schools went above and beyond in regards to the school playgrounds and would love to see a park where a family can go and spend the day.

Brown: A 2-million-dollar budget makes me think that a splashpad is off the table.

Melville: Nothing is off the table; other grant opportunities are available. Manhattan Park didn't qualify for this specific grant, while Waterfront Park would qualify.

Sorota: Wondered if the final decision was made on the grant applications that were submitted previously.

Melville: The other grant was the SPARKS Grant and EGR was unable to secure that.

Arendshorst: Wondered what conversations have been had about pickleball, specifically related to Mr. Meyer's letter.

Melville: There has been contact with the company Mr. Meyers had suggested. Currently the city is waiting to see where the pickleball courts end up before the \$11,000 is paid for a sound study. The turn-around for the sound study is a couple of weeks.

Parke: Are there any recommendations? Does this company come at different times throughout the year to assess?

Melville: Unsure at this point.

Fisher: Wondered about moving things around the volleyball courts.

Melville: Everything hinges on if the pavilion stays or is relocated, but nothing is locked in at this point.

Arendshorst: Thoughts of a new pavilion and separate restrooms? What's the cost?

Charles: \$3-400,000 swing, with a new pavilion and restroom.

Melville \$180-200,000 range for the school pavilions.

Arendshorst: Roughly the cost of concept C?

Charles: Yes, close.

Brown: Tennis courts are in pretty bad shape; is the current location the best place for them for the long term?

Melville: The ground in this area is clay and the current courts are asphalt and are at their life's end. Post-tension concrete is low maintenance. The way courts are made today is significantly better.

Brown: Is the proposed rain garden a way to help with drainage in that area?

Melville: It's environmental, not because of an issue.

Brown: Wondered where the sound berms are, isn't really seeing any of the concepts. How much will the sound barrier reduce the noise?

Charles: The Viridis team would be able to answer these questions.

Jacoby: Suggested moving pickleball behind the playground.

Melville: Stated that they are trying to keep as much green space as possible for sports.

Jacoby: Suggested flipping the courts and playground.

Melville: Plans to connect with the design team.

Parks Improvement Project Updates:

Man-5: Construction is complete. The pathway and seating area have been poured. There is good growth on the field and the drainage is great. In the spring the new scoreboard and bleachers will be installed.

Fred Bunn Trail: People are using the trails, plans for educating users on the rules of the trails and not using them when muddy. Completion is planned for mid to late November.

Lakeside: Baseball field will need to be completed in the spring.

Breton Downs: Restoration needs to be done in the spring or summer.

Report of Director:

Tomorrow night there will be a work session with the City Commission.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 pm

Next Meeting November 27, 2023