



**City of Newport
Park Board Meeting
May 22, 2014**

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

Board Members present – Tom Aguilar-Downing; Emily White; Marge Meconis; Anita Perkins;

Board Members absent – Laura Duffey;

Also present –John Neska, Executive Director; Tim Geraghty, Council Liaison

3. APPROVAL OF PARK BOARD MINUTES

A. Park Board Minutes of March 27, 2014 Regular Meeting

Motion by White, seconded by Meconis, to approve the Park Board Minutes of March 27, 2014 as presented. With 4 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent, the motion carried.

4. REVIEW 2014 GOALS

Chairperson Aguilar-Downing - John, is there an update on the Loveland warming house renovations?

Executive Director Neska - We haven't started it yet. We have the signage for the bat houses but haven't installed them yet. I'm also in the progress of putting together an interpretive sign on solar power.

Chairperson Aguilar-Downing - I did fill out a form for Pioneer Day and requested electricity so we can play videos.

5. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT -

A. Update on the 2014 Photo Contest

Chairperson Aguilar-Downing announced the winners of the 2014 Winter Photo Contest. The winners are below and the photos are online:

- Best Nature Shot, Adult - Jen Knutson, "Winter Prairie"
- Best Nature Shot, Youth - Brooke Kolodziej, "Hockey Fun at Loveland"
- Best People/Animal Shot, Adult - Jen Knutson, "Determination"
- Best Black and White Shot, Adult - Jen Knutson, "Down the Pipeline Trail"
- Best Black and White Shot, Youth - Bethany Habbena, "Snowy Trail"

The judges for the photo contest are Brian North, North Pole Restaurant, Jamie Smith, Library and Community Center, Bess Coy, East Ridge High School, Kari Layland, Layland Photographic Studios, and Tom Aguilar-Downing, Park Board Chairperson. Chairperson Aguilar-Downing thanked the judges.

The deadline for the Spring Photo Contest is June 30, 2014. Information on the Contest is on the City's website, ci.newport.mn.us.

B. Discussion Regarding Natural Resources Management Plan

Chairperson Aguilar-Downing - You received a mailing from Renee. The impetus for this discussion was an idea of bringing the Great River Greening Organization and be able to help us do some conservation and greening work in the parks. They require any municipality they work with to have an Environmental Resource Management Plan either in place or they will help work on it. I searched plans for surrounding cities and that was what was sent to you. I'm asking the Board members to take a look at these sites to see what other cities are doing, what we're doing and where we want to go with it and we can discuss it next month.

Executive Director Neska - I did some basic research and called Great River Greening because they are different with each city. After talking with the Administrator and some staff, our main intent would be along the River for the next couple years versus up on the hill. We would probably dedicate what we think we want and our needs along Cedar Lane. Great River Greening would need an assessment of what our needs are, how we would address them, and how would we handle changes if need be. I thought Laura had some discussions with the DNR in regards to ideas for doing this. I also spoke with TKDA and it's a minimum of \$7,000 to \$9,000 to do this. Are there better places to spend that money? In 2013, a lot of it is sharing, if it's a \$20,000 or \$100,000 grant and we have to share 40 to 50%, how do we come up with that when we've already spent \$7,000 or \$8,000 on the plan. I'm hoping we can figure out most of it in the next month or two and go back and ask questions if we're going in the right direction. I want you to keep in mind that it could be a very expensive process. We should go ahead and read through each of these like Tom said.

Marge Meconis - This might be better served if we had time to digest this and come back at a workshop to discuss it more.

Emily White - I don't think we have enough information currently to discuss it.

Marge Meconis - Laura had brought up working with MN Greening but that's as far as we know and I would want a lot more information. It would be good to take advantage of it but the grants that we've been involved in want up front money that we have to put forth in-kind or dollars. I would like to see us discuss this more in a workshop situation.

Mayor Geraghty - I think it's a good idea to look at.

Executive Director Neska - A lot of it dealt with restoration and I don't know how that would be a part of Cedar Lane. All good questions.

Councilman Sumner - Can you give me a 30-second summary of the proposed plan?

Chairperson Aguilar-Downing - Great River Greening is a nonprofit organization that leads and supports community based restoration of natural areas and open spaces. Greening involves local citizens in hands-on volunteer and training programs on a larger scale than any other Twin Cities organization since inception in 1995. Great River Greening can help communities manage natural areas and open spaces by raising funds, bringing volunteers, and offering training to ensure long-term. One of the requirements is a natural resources management plan and that's where the idea opened up. John raised the idea of getting funds for that restoration but if we didn't get those funds, to have a plan in place makes sense.

Executive Director Neska - When we put the Comp Plan together, our main concerns were the four major parks. Bailey wasn't a part of it because that was through a group effort. The properties on Cedar Lane and the island weren't part of the discussion. At some point, the Comp Plan could be updated to add those two areas. Most of the discussion now would be trying to plan ahead for the River area.

Chairperson Aguilar-Downing - There are several pages in the Comp Plan that touch the parks and open trails, it's not all in one place.

Councilman Sumner - Could we approach someone in college that is working on their masters on this?

Chairperson Aguilar-Downing - That idea occurred to me as well.

Executive Director Neska - I think the basis first would be if we're fortunate enough to acquire those last few pieces then we would get into design and ideas.

Mayor Geraghty - I think it would be a great opportunity if we get that island on a whole.

Executive Director Neska - Yes, but it might be a couple years down the road and I don't know if we want to get too concerned with a design right now.

Councilman Sumner - We can plan for it now even if we don't have the additional pieces of property right now.

Marge Meconis - I think that's what he is saying, to do this pre-planning so as the land becomes available and then even if you want to get a graduate student involved, the City would still want to be the driver, so it's good to know what we want as a City and our population and then talk with the U of M to see if there's anyone that would want to take advantage of the opportunity. You need an idea of where you're going first.

Mayor Geraghty - Can the plan be specifically focused or does it need to be all of the parks?

Executive Director Neska - After Tom's study, it looks like we could focus but we need to find that out.

Chairperson Aguilar-Downing - At one point, I thought this is more than the Park Board, the forest from Bailey to Loveland spans across several private properties. As John is suggesting, we probably want to look at the parcel by the river. I think Marge's point is good, let's hash the details out. I would suggest that the next meeting be a workshop.

Marge Meconis - That works for me.

6. BOARD REPORTS

A. Marge Meconis - The only thing I wanted to pass on was a comment made to me by Susan Lindoo. That is for people to watch out for garlic mustard. She's seeing much more invasive in the Wild Ridge area. You can also see it along Glen Road. I haven't seen it so much in the School Forest. Laura had a nice article about buckthorn in the newsletter, we might want to do one on garlic mustard. It's pretty easy to identify. It's very invasive and spreads like wildfire.

B. Anita Perkins - Back in the first part of April I sent out thank you notes to those who have adopted our trails and parks. We also got a lot of people that spoke with Renee and said they would like to continue. I would like to thank them for continuing their service and I would like to thank those who are not continuing for their past work. One big thank you goes out to Newport Elementary, they did a spring service project and cleaned Hastings Avenue from Bailey Road to the Cemetery. Thank you to the students, staff and parents.

Executive Director Neska - Thank you from us, Public Works and the community, that is the biggest job in the world and to have it done in a couple hours is great. We really appreciate that effort.

Anita Perkins - The student council decided to do that, we probably had about 30-40 people. We still have many trails that need help.

Chairperson Aguilar-Downing - I do the Bailey School Forest area and now is a good time to get out there with the snow gone and the grass is still sprouting. We do need more volunteers but you don't need to formally volunteer.

Executive Director Neska - It is that easy and we are so thankful for it.

C. Emily White - I would like to discuss our fun walk at the next meeting. Also, Newport Lutheran will be doing a service day the first Sunday after Labor Day so if you have a project let us know.

Executive Director Neska - Ok.

D. Laura Duffey - Nothing to report

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT -

Executive Director Neska - Just a few items tonight. I emailed a bunch of you in regards to planting along the Veterans Memorial. I contacted the HPC a second time and they didn't have any discussion. It's not a big deal, I can handle it in the next couple weeks.

Marge Meconis - MN Greening, we had always been getting plants through them and they cut back this year so I was waiting to hear from this until I got back to you.

Emily White - Yes, one of the big donors backed out this year. We had to scramble to get our planters planted. Is it a case of getting someone to plant them?

Executive Director Neska - No, we can do that, I just thought I'd throw it out there. I'll get lighting in for the flag soon and then we'll plant after that.

Emily White - MN Greening, whatever we get from them needs to go on public property and they were still looking for other donors, the big donor didn't come through until the middle of June last year so there's still time.

Executive Director Neska - That's fine as long as we can get it planted by Pioneer Day. I met with Councilman Sumner yesterday in regards to two items. The first discussion arose in regards to our community gardens. The City spent a quarter of a million dollars on the current community garden and we might want to put it back on the tax rolls in the future. If that were to happen we want to know where to put the community garden. One of the areas we looked at was part of the refinery on 5th Avenue. Councilman Sumner is on the committee for the refinery and I thought that he could raise a discussion with them. That would be a good two, three, four years down the road. There was discussion at the last Council meeting in regards to the deer hunt, the Council voted to do another hunt this season. Councilman Ingemann did a deer count and they estimated that we have plus or minus 42 deer in the community and our community has a capacity of 12. We'll see where the hunt takes us and the Council did agree to leave it open as an annual event until it did need to be reviewed again. That's about it.

Councilman Sumner - In the latest Newport News, I didn't see a date for Buckthorn Day.

Executive Director Neska - October 25 is scheduled.

Councilman Sumner - I have a couple of very large maple trees on my property and they just dropped a lot of seedlings. I know we have that big property around the pond, could we plant maple trees along there?

Executive Director Neska - I know the City is working with MnDot on possibly acquiring trees for it but it'd be a good question in regards to your seedlings.

Councilman Sumner - Of course we would need to provide a good place for them and wrap chicken wire around them for the first five years.

Executive Director Neska - The hard part from our standpoint is trying to keep them alive. Usually, there's a three year warranty with MnDot but with my five guys, we could never keep up with that.

Councilman Sumner - If they were my trees I could water them as needed. I would like to investigate that possibility. Also, how about bird houses around there?

Executive Director Neska - We're open to donations of that kind, we're not budgeted for them. We as a Park Board would probably forward it to the Council.

Councilman Sumner - If you could look at that too that would be great. Also, in the past, the Park Board has had a table at Pioneer Day and they've had examples of plants. I want to make sure that we'll have examples of the plants that were mentioned in the newsletter to replace buckthorn. I'm not sure what all of those are so if we could have examples or pictures that would be good. If we do this Great River Greening project, does that match their approval? If we could get their approval on that. Also, how about bags for trash, can we get them from the City? I walk around my neighborhood and will pick up trash but I don't know if there's an approved bag and how to get rid of it.

Executive Director Neska - Yes. You can set them curbside and we'll pick them up. Try to separate it because we do recycle and like to separate it.

Councilman Sumner - It might be an additional incentive. I do want to publicly mention and thank people that are helping by taking care of the gardens and trails. It does make Newport look that much more beautiful.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Perkins, seconded by White, to adjourn the Park Board Meeting at 7:49 P.M. With 4 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Absent, the motion carried.

Signed: _____
Tom Aguilar-Downing, Chairperson

Respectfully submitted,

Renee Eisenbeisz
Executive Analyst