

WEST ST. PAUL PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE WORK SESSION
Tuesday, April 13, 2021

Parks & Rec. Members Present: Dave Lynch, Bob Gausman, Jay DeLaRosby, Kelly Gibbons, Sara Blair, Mike Petrasek

Non-voting Members Present: Sharon G. Hatfield, Parks and Public Works Administrative Specialist; Dave Schletty, Assistant Parks & Recreation Director

1. **ROLL CALL**
2. **NEW BUSINESS**

a. Marthaler Park Redevelopment

Chair Petrasek called the work session to order at 5:39 pm. Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Schletty said that tonight's session would involve committee members going through the Marthaler Park Master Plan to refine the final draft of the priority improvements to Marthaler Park and to discuss how the work should be done in phases. Schletty reminded the committee of the exercise that was done at the Open House [in 2017.] The minutes from WSB shows a summary of what the residents' top priorities are and their lowest priorities. The City used these priorities to come up with the best options for the park. Schletty said that the City has funding and can break down the improvement projects into different phases. There are multiple projects. The parking lot area and the trails/loop around the lake is one piece of the project. Another piece is the new picnic pavilion. The third part is the new playground. Improvements to the lake include the shoreline restoration and [possibly] a fishing pier. Improvements to the sledding hill include rehabbing and clearing it to bring it back to the former glory days. Member Lynch asked about the restoration work and if it would be done in phases or be part of one large bid. He also asked if volunteers would do the clearing around the lake. Schletty said that it will probably be done in different phases; a third party will do the restoration of the shoreline. The City might work with another company to get a grant to help the City do this. Schletty does not envision the whole thing being lumped in under one contractor. The City will probably get a separate bid on the playground. The picnic shelter will also be a separate bid. Lynch asked about the work needed on the backside of the pond. The contractor would need the parking lot for their equipment. Schletty said that this was a good [point.]. The City would not want to build a brand new parking lot and then have it be a workspace.

Schletty went on to say that the City has secured funding for the work to be done in 2022 and 2023. The funding comes from park dedication fees and from moving other funding around. Petrasek remarked that paved trails and modern bathrooms are top priorities for the residents. In his estimation, something has to be done with the parking lot. It needs to be moved closer to the tennis courts if the sledding hill is to be restored. He asked if another playground equipment is needed, now that a new playground has been installed down the hill. Schletty said that the Committee originally talked about having two playground sets. The set at the top of the hill had to be removed because of its poor condition. The City was able to secure the new set very cheaply on a "fire sale." The City also received funding from the Rotary Club for the playground. Now the park can almost be broken into two areas. Schletty said that a second playground would be appropriate. Lynch said that he can identify three areas. There is the area at the bottom of the hill with the basketball court/playground. There is the area at the top of the hill north of the pond. Lastly, there is the area west of the pond. It make sense to have a centralized area with a playground. Schletty said that the three picnic shelters located in the center of the park currently would be removed in the reconstruction. A ravine will be cut into the central area of the park when the new trail comes into construction. The trail will take this green space away. Schletty went on to say that another if the City adds another playground, it will not have to be so big. The committee has talked about putting in an inclusive playground, something of an attraction to the park.

Lynch said that it would make sense to put in the new parking lot in as stage one and then to close the existing parking lot for the future construction stage. Schletty agreed and said that the final lift of asphalt for the parking lot could wait until the very end of the project. Schletty asked Committee Members if they are in agreement with the amenities called out in the new plan. Lynch brought up the proposed boardwalk across the not the big pond but the second smaller pond. He did not see this on the plan today. Schletty said that some things have changed since the boardwalk was discussed. Because of the proximity of neighboring properties and the new trail design, and the [dry] wetland, the boardwalk was removed from the plan. It could still be done, but there are DNR regulations to consider. It could be an improvement done in the future. Member Gausman said he likes the plan but there gets to be a lot of walking around in the back. Schletty agreed. The parking has been eliminated from the center of the park and is now located on the outskirts of the park. The nice thing is that the area is very flat and accessible. Lynch asked about the accessibility of the maintenance vehicles. Schletty said that there would be a paved 8 ½ foot wide trail that will come off the parking lot for the maintenance staff to drive. People who are renting the shelter would be able to drive to the shelter with their supplies for their event. The trail would not be used by the general public, however. Member DeLaRosby asked about the status of Dakota County and the timing of the trail project. Schletty said that they approved the contract last night. The JPA with the County was approved for the whole payment of the trail; the City is “on the hook” for no more than \$150K. The contract itself for the actual trail is \$615K. It fell under the estimate. The contractor was approved and the preconstruction meeting is set for April 27. They will break ground in May. Lynch said that the trail work would necessitate getting the new parking lot done first. Gausman asked about the City acquiring some of the lots. Schletty said that it was unlikely. There was an opportunity to acquiring the lots further to the west; the two lots closest to the park. One just sold to a younger family.

Petrasek talked about prioritizing the list; the list was generated in 2017. Petrasek said that this was not great, but not bad. Schletty has envisioned having another public open house this summer to update residents on the project and give them the final chance to give input. Petrasek sees six things as must-dos: the parking lot, paved trails, tennis courts picnic shelter and modern restrooms and playground equipment. The tennis courts have already been done. He does not see amphitheater [going into the park.] He does not know if the City has enough money to do the splash pad or mountain bike trail and the gaga court. Petrasek suggested that last items be done after everything else has been accomplished. Lynch asked if the sledding hill improvements would be bid out or done in-house. Schletty said that this would be part of a bid; it may be part of the grant to clean up the shoreline. Lynch said it does not make sense to build the shelter on the hill under the sledding hill is restored. Schletty said that the shelter could take many forms: a lookout tower, a hill top overlook, a small shelter or gazebo. Lynch suggested a lookout platform large enough for a picnic table. DeLaRosby said that the list is 3 ½ years old and a lot of it has already been delivered. DeLaRosby asked if the approved bid with the county included the trailhead building. Schletty said that the bid last night did not include any bathroom facilities. Staff anticipates that the bathroom facilities will also be a shared cost with the County after the trail is done. It would make sense to install the picnic shelter with the bathroom facility. Petrasek suggested moving the modern restrooms down the list until the City knows about the funding status with the County. Schletty clarified that the restrooms would be a separate building close to the [new] picnic shelter. The shelter could still have running water in a kitchen space. It will come down to cost.

Schletty summarized the budget for the next two years: 2022-\$450 K, 2023-\$600K. Schletty confirmed that this does not include grant money or potential cost share with the county. The parking lot and the trail work will cost about \$350K. Petrasek said this would leave \$100K for the playground equipment, picnic shelter and modern restrooms. Schletty said the cost of the pond improvements would be \$130 K. This included restoration of the shoreline and the boardwalk. Schletty said that these are rough numbers.

The improvements to the sledding hill are closer to \$100K; they will cost about \$116K. Schletty added, “Unless you are putting a Taj Mahal on top of the hill, the City would not be spending 100K on the sledding hill. This improvement might be the best bet. DeLaRosby asked if the pond restoration estimate included dredging the pond. Schletty said the restoration would cover the shoreline; the City does not know if the DNR would allow dredging. It would be the most logical thing to install a pier when the shoreline restoration is being done. It does not necessarily have to be done at the same time, however. Petrasek asked about the cost for the picnic shelter. Schletty said that the playground and picnic shelter enclosure were lumped together in cost and would be about \$407K. Schletty said that the modern bathrooms would be about \$100-150K. This is without the cost share.

Lynch said that he liked DeLaRosby’s plan to prioritize the pond for the first year. One of the items is to increase the accessibility to the pond. He wondered if there would be the chance of plowing rinks in the pond. Schletty said that there is a resident already doing this. Potentially, it could be done by maintenance staff. Petrasek, as an old government accountant, said there is \$1,050,000 to spend over two years. He asked if the 450K goes away if not spent in the first year. Schletty said that the \$450K would not go away; however, the second year budget of \$600K would not be spent earlier than 2023. Lynch asked when the City would know about the grant funding. Schletty said that he had to do more research on the grant. The grant was awarded as part of a lump sum; he does not know about the priority funding is on the parks. It was part of the Legacy Fund, through the Great River Greening. There are a lot of moving pieces to be sorted. The City can still get some separate funding.

Schletty asked the Committee if there was anything missing from the plan. Petrasek said that he does not think there is room for an amphitheater. Schletty said that he has some ideas for an amphitheater in another park. Petrasek exclaimed, “Kennedy!” Schletty said, “Not at Kennedy.”

Petrasek summarized the priorities of the first year of construction- the parking lot, paved trails and the pond. He asked the Committee what they thought about this. DeLaRosby said that it sounds good to him. Blair said that she is excited to get outside next year with family and friends. The park will be a hot commodity. The priorities put forward by Petrasek are okay with Blair. Gibbons said she works in construction; everything has to be done in stages. She agrees with Petrasek’s prioritization. Petrasek summarized 2023’s priorities: playground equipment, picnic shelter and modern bathrooms and sledding hill. The amphitheater, splash pad, art sculpture, mountain bike trail and gaga pit would have to wait for Phase III. Petrasek said that Schletty has his orders. Now when the City has a public meeting, there will be a plan to present. Lynch said that this is a great idea; there will be a Phase I that will set the pace. Schletty said that next year sets up the infrastructure; the second year is the “showy stuff” with the new shelter and playground. The City will get more input and different design options during the second phase.

b. Park Inventory/Master Plan

Schletty did a walk-through of all of the City’s parks and what the Committee has discussed for improvements. He would like to get something before Council for a CIP over the next 10-15 years for the small parks.

Albert Park- The Committee talked about updating the landscaping that can be done in-house. LED lighting for the flagpole was also suggested. Schletty does not envision any plans for this park. The City does not know what will happen to the intersection and the Smith Dodd group revitalization effort. There might be some reshaping of the road. There is potential of the park going away or looking different.

Dodd Park- Because of the Smith Dodd shopping center redevelopment, there may be changes that affect this park. Schletty anticipates still having the park but it may look different in the future. The playground

will need to be replaced within the next 2-3 years. The City needs to determine if the playground should be relocated as well. The shelter is not being used as a warming house anymore. The City has talked about replacing the structure with an open sided shelter; it would not need to be locked/unlocked. Lynch said that removing the shelter could open up the sight lines to the playground. Schletty said this is a good point. He said the air raid siren in the park that needs to be considered.

Emerson Park- This park has been, “identified quite a bit.” The playground will be replaced in 2024. The courts will be resurfaced by 2023. A tennis rebound wall has been considered as has switching to only to pickleball courts. The switch to pickleball only happened this year. Picnic tables, benches and trashcans will be added/replaced when the playground is replaced. The Committee has also talked about adding a small gazebo or picnic shelter in the future. Regrading the skating area and replanting the grass are also needed to restore the green space. This could be done in-house. Lynch asked about the skating rink. Schletty said there are no plans to re-flood the skating area. The water pressure from the hydrant across the street is the worst in town and makes flooding the rink very difficult.

Garlough Park- The City has identified the River to River Trail plans for the park. The plans were finalized in 2020. The trail has already been contracted. The City has talked about adding a bike rack and bench for disc golf users. Lynch said the addition is very much needed; there are often people that are waiting to tee off. Schletty said that the addition would be done with the trail work; the County will pay for some bike racks. Updates to the disc golf course included multiple tee pads. Lynch said that this was done already. Lynch would like to talk more about the disc golf course; he would like to put in recreation league tee pads. They are much shorter holes for younger players and the new older player. Lynch suggested installing drain tile under the first fairway. There used to be a natural flow in this part of the course but now the wood chips are creating a dam in the course. Schletty said that he and Lynch should meet at the course so that he can see exactly where this is. Lynch said that in the springtime, there is a lot of standing water in this area.

Harmon Park- The Committee has not identified anything in this park. Everything is new. The Committee will review this park in the next 5 years as the park starts to age.

Haskell Park- The tennis courts have been resurfaced recently. The playground was replaced two summers ago. The Committee has discussed replacing the warming house with a new type of shelter, or a bigger warming house for summer programs or storage. Lynch asked about the condition of the blacktop in Haskell Park. Lynch said there is an asphalt pad in the park that is “out of place.” Petrsek said that the Committee needed to revisit this park. Schletty said that along with the possible replacement of the warming house is the replacement of the hockey boards.

Kennedy Park-The Committee has talked about playground replacement and possible new location for the playground. The Committee reviewed the park; the improvements suggested were not met favorably by the residents. The Committee also talked about adding a trail to the park. Schletty would like to have a neighborhood meeting and invite residents that live within 4-5 blocks of the park to revisit possible improvements to the park. Lynch said that improvements to the grass area should be discussed. Schletty agreed and said this should be considered with all of the parks that have converted their ice rinks permanently to green space.

Marthaler- The park is, “Done and Done.”

Mud Lake- The Committee has discussed restoring the natural trail around the lake and considered establishing a trail or sidewalk on the east and west sides. Other plans include maximizing the cattail and lily pad removal, working with the DNR to get more control over maintenance and improvements, and adding a pier, fountain or aerator or access ramp. All of the suggested improvements are probably still

valid. Lynch said two more trees on the west side could be planted; a couple of oak trees were lost in recent years. Schletty will be planting trees this fall and will consider replacing the oaks in this park.

Oakdale Park- The basketball courts need resurfacing. The Committee talked about putting in a pickleball court or a gaga court on the open half of the court. The grill should be replaced. The playground equipment should be good for a few years. In the next 5 years, the City will look at replacement. There are ash trees on the street side of the park; they are probably in decline and need to be replaced.

Orme Park- Schletty recently learned that “Orme” is pronounced /‘òrm/. Schletty said the Committee could put a plaque to explain the origination of the name. Plaques in the park could be a task for the future Arts Commission. The Committee has discussed replacement of the warming house possibly and paving of the outdoor rink to allow year round activity. Lynch said one of the things to look at is drainage; there is a lot of standing water around the low area of the rink. Gausman suggested that the plaque work be combined with the entrance signs for the parks.

Lynch suggested a gaga pit for Southview Park; a gaga pit in this park would be good for the apartment dwellers that live nearby.

A permanent parking area was also suggested for Orme Park.

Southview Park- Off-street and handicap parking were discussed for this park. Playground replacement is about 5 years out for this park. Petrasek said that the Committee needs Bellows’ input for the park improvements. Schletty said that the picnic shelter needs replacement. It is seeing its age.

Weschcke Park- The playground equipment replacement is probably 5 years out. The basketball courts have been resurfaced. There is an open half court of basketball; there is thought of having a dedicated pickleball court.

Sports Complex- The Committee will discuss the Sports Complex and specifically about the horseshoe court at its May meeting.

Swimming pool- The playground will have to be redone in the next two years. Council last night approved the contract with the YMCA. Other ideas included adding a sand volleyball court and formally naming the playground/park area.

The work session adjourned at 6:59pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon G. Hatfield