



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND ENERGY COMMISSION

Fridley Municipal Center, 7071 University Ave Ne

MINUTES

April 13, 2021

Location: Zoom Webinar

Call to Order

Commissioner Olberding called the Environmental Quality and Energy Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Amy Dritz, Justin Foell, Nick Olberding, Heidi Ferris, Mark Hansen, Aaron Klemz, and Sam Stoxen

Staff: Rachel Workin, Environmental Planner; Deborah Dahl, Director of Community Services and Employee Resources; Alyssa Kruzel, Community Engagement Specialist

Approval of Environmental Quality and Energy Commission Minutes

1. Adopt the Agenda

Commissioner Hansen made a motion to adopt the agenda and Commissioner Stoxen seconded the motion.

MOTION PASSED unanimously

2. Approve March 9 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Hansen made a motion to approve the minutes and Commissioner Foell seconded the motion.

MOTION PASSED unanimously.

New Business

1. Commission Updates

a. New Commission Member Aaron Klemz

b. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Commissioner Dritz was appointed Chair and Commissioner Olberding as Vice Chair.

2. Parks Master Plan Update – Deborah Dahl, Director of Community Services and Employee Resources

The Parks Master Plan is up and running, business and redevelopment is changing, housing additions and apartment buildings are being built and the Fridley is transforming. The biggest next venture is to improve the entire park system city wide. Fridley's park system was established more than 50 years ago. There are 38 parks in the city and that is a lot to maintain, improve and enhance. Parks and trails bring value to our community and residents.

Parks and trees are good for the environment and improves our health and fitness. In 2015 the city went into action in trying to figure out where the issues were and make some changes. A plan and survey was done around Moore Lake that would cost \$4.5m. If all our money was spent on one park, what will happen to other parks and trails? From that Finding your Fun in Fridley was developed and launched in 2019. Just about

everyone in the city is able to get to a park within walking distance. We have learned it isn't about the abundance of parks but if the needs are being served for those who use the parks.

Fridley has a lot of nice parks, but conditions need to be improved systemwide. There has never been a systematic or financial plan on how to deal with park infrastructure needs. Most of our parks do not adhere or only meet minimum ADA guidelines. Safety is #1 priority. The maintenance team does a great job and they were asked for input and evaluation of our parks.

The capital value investment of parks for the city is about \$43.0M in assets. We receive about \$215,000 on an annual basis from LGA funding, park dedication fees and grants to offset expenses. About \$243,000 is spent annually in capital park improvement projects. Currently there is about \$1.0m to spend on the park system. The city cannot spend more than 65% of the funds available. The Springbrook Nature Center has had great success and is the crown jewel of the city. Buildings were transformed to beautiful buildings and attractive amenities were added.

Fridley residents want improved playground amenities, gathering spaces, year-round use and connectivity, and unique amenities and experiences. Additionally, being ADA compliant, communication, signage, technology/Wi-Fi and lighting. Include nature by expanding trails, year-round use, sustainable and environmentally friendly. Provide quality facilities with gathering spaces, unique experiences, and flexible to meet changing needs.

The vision is to modernize the park system and take it to the next level. Guide future investments for development and improvements, identify strategic methodology for prioritization and line up efforts with the 2040 comprehensive plan. The planning process performed an in-depth analysis of area needs and parks. They looked at access and barriers as well as underserved populations. An engagement was initiated with key groups and partners and concept plans were designed. A draft of an implementation strategy was prepared along with cost estimates.

A Story Map website was created, and staff continue to collect feedback. The goals and concept plans include to enhance the unique identity of community parks, improve, update parks to meet the current needs of the community and current trends in recreation, increase connectivity throughout the park system, and environmental stewardship initiatives. The planning process and draft implementation strategy includes balance recreation across the community, meet the needs of diverse community demographics, improve access to recreation for underserved populations, account for changes in recreation trends and demands, build champions and support for the future and prioritize parks. Visit fridleymn.gov/findingyourfun-updates and use the online parks map to view existing amenities, look at neighborhood parks and community park design concepts, submit ideas and feedback by April 30. Reach out to staff, council, and commissions members.

Moore Lake is 14 acres and the existing features include playground, beach concessions and building with restrooms picnic shelters, tennis, basketball and volleyball court, fishing piers, trails/walks, swimming beach, ball field and parking lot. The funding options estimated cost is \$50 million 10-year plan. Current capital

improvement, donations and grants, round up water bills, dedicate additional Liquor Store revenue, events and fundraising, park dedication fees, pursue legislation action, raise fees for programs and services, bonding, and joint powers or sponsorship from schools and businesses. Communication and marketing plan will be done through the City website, social media and nextdoor.com, Fridley for you emails, digital billboard, City newsletter, community connection videos and lawn signs in parks and throughout the City.

The next steps include public engagement and communications, resident survey results, explore funding options, compile and analyze feedback and results, town hall meeting June 5th and follow up with stakeholders and determine the next steps. Current projects include Craig Park, Civic Campus Playground, Civic Campus Trail, Bridge and Pond, Joint Powers Agreement review with Anoka County Parks, SNC Pavilion/Activity Center is completed and 2021-22 projects.

Using the current pace for parks improvements the project will take 137 years to complete. Assets will continue to deteriorate, health and safety hazards are present, it is a poor image and loss of pride, loss of home and business value, loss of future revenue with programs, loss of public support and trust and the cost for revitalization will continue to increase. If the parks master plan is successful it will build focus on Fridley Goals of Vibrancy, Safety and Environmentally Friendly. It will expand access with Parks for All, provide more programs and options for fun in Fridley, build a stronger, healthier and safer community, show that we listened and responded to our community, increase home and business values, attract new residents, business and visitors, prepare for the next generations and prepare and building our \$43 million assets.

How can you get involved? Review the concepts and designs, provide feedback or complete surveys, spread the word and build awareness, share any ideas for funding, become a Parks Champion and make connections and introductions with developers, realtors, groups, or businesses if they want to become more involved.

Old Business

3. Energy Action Update

Ms. Workin said that Xcel continues to support this program and do monthly check ins. Goals are being set based on community energy use. The key takeaway is that we are able to meet goals on resident participation, however the same success was not seen with the commercial use and in the area of multi-family programs. We are proud of the work we did and will continue in the future. There will be concerts on Tuesdays at the Civic Campus and we plan to do some marketing outreach to talk about energy efficiency programs at the concerts.

Adjourn

Commissioner Stoxen made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Ferris seconded the motion.

MOTION PASSED unanimously.