

MINUTES
PARKS, ARTS & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING
Special joint meeting with Planning Commission
THURSDAY
JANUARY 28, 2021 - 8:00 A.M.

“To enhance community pride through developing and maintaining City parks with a high standard of quality.”

- Members Present: Lynn Anderson, Julie Jelen,
Adam Leiferman, Nancy McCaffrey, Brian Stoll
- Members Absent: Jack Gregor, Sam Murdoff
- Staff Present: Sara Cahill, Beth Green, Tom Pawelk,
Ron Hackenmueller, Jennifer Schreiber, Angela Schumann, Jacob
Thunander
- Others Present: Planning Commissioners Eric Hager, Paul Konsor, Sue Seeger,
Andrew Tapper, Alison Zimpfer, Steve Grittmann, Charlotte Gabler

1. Call to Order.

Chair Brian Stoll called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and declared a quorum. Members of the Planning Commission were in attendance for the Special Joint Meeting.

Jennifer Schreiber administered the Oath of Office to Commissioner Eric Hager.

2. Approve Minutes of Regular PARC Meeting from December 3, 2020.

NANCY MCCAFFREY MOVED TO APPROVE THE REGULAR PARC MEETING MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 3, 2020. MOTION SECONDED BY JULIE JELEN. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, 5-0.

3. Consideration of adding to or removing items from the agenda.

None.

4. Joint discussion with Planning Commission on Chelsea Commons Small Area Plan.

- a. Site and project context. City Council has taken the next step toward implementation of a mixed-use development concept proposed for the area known as “Chelsea Commons” by authorizing a Small Area Plan process. The land area is located south of Chelsea Road, north of School Boulevard, and between Cedar Street and Edmonson Avenue.

The mixed-use concept for Chelsea Commons was initially suggested in 2019 in response to proposals the city was receiving throughout the community for conversion of land guided or zoned for commercial uses to mid to high-density residential. Due to its location and size of approximately 100 acres, the Chelsea Commons area was viewed as an ideal opportunity to create a centrally located complete neighborhood which blends commercial, residential, and public spaces.

The main feature of the site will be a central pond and pathway system amenity. The pond will be structured like Bertram to be a water reuse pond to keep the water levels up. These features will anchor and advance the development of residential uses. With the small area planning effort there will be a lot of attention on how the pond is laid out. It will be important for the water to be visible for it to be a true amenity. The vision is for the trail to provide areas to connect residential to commercial. This is something that will be totally unique to the area and offer a way for people to interact with the water with paddle boarding, canoeing, kayaking, etc.

Schumann introduced the City Planner Steve Grittmann. She said the purpose of the meeting today is for the commissioners to really give this a lot of thought and to provide input on the area planning. McCaffrey noted that she would like to see this area put on the spring park tour to get a better understanding of the size and layout of the development and area.

Steve Grittmann shared a PowerPoint presentation with the group. He noted that the project is envisioned with the stormwater pond being used as a lake amenity, along with part economic development to spur residential and commercial growth, and part open space to create a unique public experience in Monticello.

The concept relies on the basic requirement for stormwater management incumbent on all development, and the park/trail dedication components of residential development, and public street or utility dedications required of most private development. The concept plan principles include:

- Introduce multi-family into current commercial.
- Require adherence to a common pond/amenity with extensive trails and open space.
- Include variety of multi-family product types.
- Be flexible as to specific boundaries and unit styles.
- Require commercial uses fronting Chelsea & Cedar.
- Consider potential additional commercial along School Blvd.
- Enhance Edmonson and Dundas to emphasize parkway/open space.
- Incorporate gateway plaza element at corner of Chelsea & Cedar.
- Enhance architectural and building materials – high end objectives.

Grittmann said the planning process will go into mid-summer before we get to a final decision. Everything is illustrative at this point and nothing is etched in stone. As we move further through the project planning, we will get a firm depiction of the area, as it is currently in the very beginning concept stages.

Grittmann said that he wants to use this meeting time to brainstorm ideas for potential elements to be included in the public sphere. It will be important to identify private development opportunities that take advantage of the common spaces, and to identify public amenities and infrastructure that facilitate improved marketability of private land.

Comments fell into two broad categories. The first related to specific project opportunities and expectations, while the second related to potential project challenges, and whether the project scope should include additional areas of research. These are each summarized below (in no particular order):

Project Opportunities/Expectations:

- Ability to fit this project on largely undeveloped land makes it realistic, rather than trying to wedge it in to existing patterns or redevelopment.
- Water feature is the key element – make it visually attractive, accessible, useful
- Consider use of water for recreation – fishing, canoeing, paddle boats, kayaks, etc.
- Focus on common public elements between the Chelsea Commons area and the Downtown for consistency in cross-messaging.
- But remember distinctions and what makes each area unique.
- Focus on extensive internal pathway development, as well as connections to external pathway system – consider opportunities for multi-modal access.
- Focus on uniqueness of the Chelsea Commons area – what roles can it play in the city’s open space system, and what roles should it not play, given roles played by other facilities, including Downtown and Bertram Chain of Lakes, as well as others?
- What opportunities might be gained by terminating – or retaining - Dundas Road in terms of internal accessibility, visual impacts, etc.?
- Focus on four seasons of activity and benefit for the Commons – plan for improvements that will provide benefit, or be adaptable, to year-round use.
- Take advantage of, and incorporate in the design, an extensive use of grading and grade changes to emphasize and separate plantings and different use areas.
- Opportunities should include spectrum of users from full community, not just abutting development in the Commons.
- Consider water-based amenities, including fountains and other water movement.

- Consider provision of public improvements up front, in order to demonstrate amenities and benefits to prospective development/tenants.
- How might the development – public and private – serve as a template or model for development in other areas?
- Private development could be benefitted and must be integrated into city planning efforts to ensure positive outcomes. Do not lose focus on attention to partnership.
- Build in public parking areas, assuming many residents may travel by private automobile to visit the Commons, in addition to those walking or biking to the area.
- Development efforts should take advantage of the opportunity to hide/minimize parking areas, including focus on underground to minimize land cover with parking and asphalt.
- City will have as an objective an effort to make the project as cost-neutral as possible.
- Several example projects were recommended, including projects in Edina, St. Louis Park, Blaine, Arden Hills, St. Anthony.

Project Challenges:

- Can the city design for the sustainability of water feature – levels, plantings, etc.
- Will the city be able to plan not just for construction, but long-term operation and maintenance?
- How will be able to avoid eyesore potential for water and edge plantings.
- How can we be confident that there is a market for the uses included in the study, at the densities proposed – assuming these densities and uses will be a factor in cost allocation?
- What is the city’s planned phasing of construction, and how might this impact private development interests?
- Over-planning of the Chelsea Commons area beyond its reasonable role, and beyond the ability of the project to serve as a benefit to the immediate land uses.
- What are the likely impacts of traffic generated by the development in the area, and does the city have an understanding of those impacts, required on- or off-site traffic improvements, etc.?
- What will be the environmental challenges posed by the project, and how/when should this be subject to additional study?
- How will the boundaries between private and public spaces be managed and/or integrated into the use and design of the project?
- Will the project planning include attention to lighting, street furniture, street improvements, signage, and other details?
- How will the city make plans for implementation – will there be separate follow-up efforts defining both public and private implementation projects?

- Will the city maintain a flexible approach to site development, or does it expect to define and specify development design details?
- How/when will the city be able to provide information on cost contributions from private development, and how will those contributions be estimated?
- How might changes to Dundas Road, and/or the connections along and across that road, be impacted by utility services?
- How is the plan impacted by recent Comp Plan 2040 development directives, including density, floor area ratios, height, other factors? Might this be an issue, depending on the balance between market reality and private development contributions?
- Challenge will be to plan around what we don't know – environmental, market

Next chance for update or to provide more input. Steve said developing a couple of schemes and within a couple of months, early spring a couple of schemes fleshed out. Do more engineering analysis of the schemes. Then will be back in front of everyone to understand what the differences are between the options. Early Spring.

Will send calendar so that we keep corresponding, so we know where at. If you want to participate, happy to have that participation. Encourages everyone to reach out to Steve if you have other thoughts, ideas, insights, after the meeting thinking. If you are pondering. Welcome follow-up input.

Now a chance to think about it, do you envision this space to be a more naturalized space or a more cultured landscape? How do you think about this, what kind of a space are you walking through when you envision this. Very much a built landscape but mature enough with elements like large rocks and well-designed enough that it feels like a natural landscape. Like some bigger resort properties out west as an example. This will be different than Bertram where there's more natural, more of a structured purposefully developed area. Make sure that it's accessible to everyone on the trail that should be relatively flat. Picturing surrounded by elevated landscaping areas but trail flat. See as a combo area where they may be quiet areas or more active areas and well blended. More relaxing near the residential and more active near the retail space. The opportunity to experience both.

Gritman said that the comments will be incorporated, to a various extent, into concept planning for the project and/or follow-up study as appropriate. He welcomes follow-up input and for commissioners to reach out to him with any other thoughts, ideas and/or insights. There will also be continuing opportunities to participate. After more engineering review and analysis, a couple different schemes will be developed and brought forward for review in the spring.

5. Citizens requests and comments.

- a. River Mill Park skating rink request: Tom Pawelk said that residents in the River Mill neighborhood have approached the city and they are very eager for an outdoor ice rink at river Mill Park. In the past, he has also received similar requests from other residential neighborhoods. Logistically, it is not feasible to put a rink there at this time as there are infrastructure problems and groundwater issues, so the hydrant is pumped down for the season. It would also require different equipment as it's not possible to bring in 500' of hose either.

To give some history, Pawelk said that 20 years ago there were 4 eight community rinks throughout Monticello in neighborhoods and those rinks were next to hydrants.

Stalpes noted that 4th Street Park rinks are being very heavily used this year and maybe more skating areas are needed. Also discussed the idea of looking at flooding West Bridge Park again next year for general skating as there is public parking available there.

Pawelk said he would like to make improvements at 4th Street Park and regrade the open space of the ballfield area and increase the ice sheet for general skating next year. It could be divided into two different rinks so there would be four sheets of ice.

Other ideas included promoting a skating trail at Bertram. Lieferman also suggested a skating trail at Sunse4t Ponds Park.

At this point it is too late in the season to do anything this year. However, it should be looked at next year to make improvements, expand rink hours, skate guards and ice sheets. Pawelk said this item can be revisited mid-summer before budget prep to decide what to propose to city council for skating rinks for the 2021-22 season.

6. Review and select PARC applicants to interview for position openings.

Item tabled.

7. Ellison Park restroom design review.

Item tabled.

8. MontiArts Update.

Update given by Sue Seeger as follows:

- For practical reasons MontiArts has expanded its use of the corner building formerly

known as WTF on a temporary basis. We'd given Allison Hunsley, currently working on a CMAB public art grant project, a 12 x 12 space in MontiArts, but her project involves a dozen 8 x 4' panels that all need to be primed and painted. She has been relocated to the corner building, so she'd have more space to work, and because there is ample room inside the building and we are already utilizing the windows, decided to expand our residency program a bit and move several other artists in there to create projects with a community benefit.

- We received a \$1000 virtual capacity building grant from the CMAB, and have applied for a similar \$10,000 grant from the state arts board that will be reviewed in March. The second grant (if we are awarded it) will determine how we use the first grant. Meanwhile Sue is attending training workshops in this area through mid-March.
- In mid-March we are applying for 2 project grants for \$5000 each. One involves an individual artist creating a large interactive temp outdoor installation downtown. The other involves working with the Rotary as a fiscal partner for a project managed by MontiArts that pairs local artists with local downtown business owners to create public art on or in their building. The Rotary will be considering this proposal at their next meeting but leadership sounds positive on the idea so far.
- With MontiArts being eligible for fewer grants in 2021, we've had to be creative and look for other sources. Sue looked through awarded Artist Initiative projects from the state arts board and found 2 artists whose work seemed like a good fit and has invited them to Monticello to do demonstrations/give artist talks/ exhibit their work. This would be at no cost to us. The CMAB also has a program for artists to apply for their own grants to do workshops and we are working with 4 of them to create workshops to run through MontiArts that are more in depth than what is available through Community Ed.
- Monthly Open Mic nights, facilitated by Ben Lundquist, are continuing to operate remotely. When restrictions lift, we'd like to expand that format into more of an all encompassing arts experience for attendees, including artists talks and exhibits in addition to the music and spoken word sets. We think this will give the public and enhanced experience and something else fun to do downtown.

9. MCC Update.

Updated provided by Sara Cahill as follows:

- MCC continues to be open by reservation and with limited capacity. Reservations are filling up and people are eager to use the facility. An attached spreadsheet shows some tracking we have been watching.

