



MEETING NOTES

CITY OF SAINT PAUL

MEETING DATE: October 29, 2013

LOCATION: Nova Classical Academy

ATTENDING: Emily Shively, John Yust, Gary Brueggemann, Scott Olson, Kent Petterson, Martin Schieckel, Bill Driver, Jennifer Verbrugge, JoAnna Craighead, Tonya Johnson- Nicholie, Alice Messer, Adam Robbins, Pete Regnier, Don Ganje, Dave Bredemus, Paula Faughender , Brian Bloomfield, Bob Fossum, Betty Moran, Lucy Thompson, Julie Andrew, Dan Pederson, Karin Misiewicz, Brian Singer, Shawn Devine

NOT IN ATTENDANCE: Deborah Rose, Stephanie Vagle, Manual Cervantes, Rory Stierler, Halle O'Falvey, Liz McMann

NOTES BY: Alice Messer, November 21, 2013

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

Emily Shively opened up the meeting.

- Emily opened up the meeting, went through meeting agenda, and explained meeting format. Explained how scope of master plan is to decide on program elements and relationships, not determination on specific site materials.
- Reminded group that not voting on individual elements, but gathering general consensus from advisory group on plan.
- Alice stated goals of meeting were to:
 - present final master plan
 - discover priorities for implementation
 - discover who is interested in participating in future design advisory committee meetings as funding for certain plan elements becomes available

Recap of Mtg #7 by Alice Messer.

- Alice stated goals of meeting.
- Alice provided a brief recap of Mtg #7.
 1. Summary of Goals and Objectives exercise. Check-in to see if master plan in line with goals and objective developed for project.
 2. Comments from exercise incorporated into master plan presented at meeting #8.
 3. Reviewed follow-up items and provided summary of picnic shelter and rest room exercise. Preference for 6-8 tables on north and south side with separate rest room building. Medium priority for fire place and low priority for bread oven.

Alice presented final Master Plan and renderings by EOR.

Overall master plan with enlarged views of north and south picnic areas presented. See project website (www.stpaul.gov/victoriapark) for PDF version of master plan graphics and associated renderings.

Discussion following presentation of final master plan:

- Question about if trails would be groomed for cross-country skiing. Response: No, not likely to be groomed.
- Tonya stated that TIFF Funds would be eligible for sidewalk and bicycle improvements along Otto Avenue from conversation with CM Thune.
- Resolution from Victoria Park Neighborhood Association read by Paula Faughender. Resolution states support for multi-use athletic field, but not use of artificial turf, lighting or fencing surrounding multi-use turf.
 - Association currently consists of 10 residents.

Alice had group complete Prioritization Exercise, which requested committee members to rank in order of importance the master plan elements they would like to see implemented in Victoria Park. Summary of exercise is provided below:

- Priority ranking:
 1. Internal park trail system
 2. Picnic shelter/restrooms (north side)
 3. Picnic shelter/restrooms (south side)
 4. Play area (north side)
 5. External trail connections
 6. Multi-use athletic field
 7. Boardwalk in wetland
 8. Shepard Road overlook
 9. Mown turf open space
 10. Bird habitat
 11. Recirculating water feature
 12. Play area (south side)
 13. Invasive plant management
 14. Fishing pier and shoreline enhancements
 15. Community gardens
 16. Historic quarry/interpretive opportunity
 17. Amphitheater
 18. Public art
 19. Bread oven
- Response to question if would like pedestrian scale lighting along trails. 13 responded “yes” and 3 responded “no”.
- Full tally of prioritization exercise included at end of meeting notes.

Committee asked to indicate interest in future involvement in future Victoria Park Design Advisory Committees as funding becomes available.

- Committee interest included
 - picnic shelter designs (north and/or south side)

- multi-use athletic field
- play areas (north and/or south side)
- interpretive public art
- re-circulating water feature
- Alice collected responses and will keep on file.

Tonya Johnson-Nicholie facilitated question/comment period around the table. Comments summarized below:

Martin Schieckel – Overall distillation of plan and big improvement to site. Plan looks expensive and interested to see how it will roll out. Would be happy if this plan was in his neighborhood.

Pete Regnier – Thought process was wonderful up until tonight. Missing whole year of work by not letting people state priorities and specify thoughts. Does not see why cannot discuss artificial turf and natural turf at this time.

Scott Olson – Liked renderings for clear vision of park features. There is demand for athletic fields. People currently walking through the site and this validates need for robust trail system. Surprised by number of people see onsite currently.

Gary Brueggeman – Prefers athletic field to be closer to Nova and water feature closer to Adrian Street. Feels at mercy of trusting people with relocation of water feature and multi-use athletic field. Too much green space on south side. Would like to see more natural feel like at Crosby and not want to commit to amount of green space. Would like more topography on south side.

Dave Bredemus – Not much more to add. Emphasis on neighborhood use of field and fear of multi-use becoming McMurry and not accessible to public. Need to have use agreement worked out before because once field built; it won't happen.

Paula Faughender – Feels cannot make decision at this stage because questions still remain to be answered. Athletic fields are a sticking point. That said – design is beautiful and spatial arrangement makes it all fit and make sense. Neighborhood will have a gem with park design.

Karin Misiewicz – Feels that south side will be very nice. Doesn't see space as being used as soccer fields. Likes green space on south side.

Adam Robbins – Works for City and maintains natural areas. Commented on requests from community members to mow down natural plantings in Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary so they have space for gatherings. Sees mown open space on south side as a place for community gatherings and celebrations that Fort Road Federation would enjoy using. Remarkable plan with synergy between north and south side of park.

Jennifer Verbrugge – Echoes Martin with comments on merging of ideas. Concern regarding distrust with Parks and City. Does not know history of distrust, but has full confidence that plan is what will be implemented. Forget the history of the site and look at plan for what we have at the site. Thanks City for their work.

John Yust – Concerned with flipping parcels and depth of water feature. Doesn't understand why cannot flip multi-use athletic field and water feature. Pleased with connections to Mississippi River.

Lucy Thompson – Feels the process has done a great job of managing expectations of the site. Trusts what Parks says and does not see hidden agenda with open space on south side. Park design is incredible improvement from where we started. Largest challenge will be prioritization exercise and plan for implementation.

Bob Fossum – Happy with plan. Likes the water feature and endorses plan. Commented on how large number of people will be exposed to water feature when they recreate at the site. Exposing new people to site will be a huge stewardship benefit for water and that is mission of Capital Regions Watershed District.

Brian Bloomfield – Super excited about the plan. It is functional, interactive and educational. School is excited about multi-use athletic field. Excited about the water feature, the bread oven, and having earth science classes outside. So pleased, but will be hard to wait for plan to be implemented.

Kent Petterson – Natural area on the south side and happy to see that taking shape and active area on north. A lot to like in the plan. Few tweaks; mown turf on south side with contours on the south, less water on north side and more water on south, not sure about location of amphitheater, see ravine bridge at bluff as unnecessary expense and new element to plan

Bill Driver – No comment.

Questions and Comments where then heard from members of the public.

JoAnne Craighead – Echo Paula and Gary

Dan Pederson – Mown turf open space on south side is perfect place for people to hang out and have fun. Shame to prevent kids from doing that. Good process.

Julie Andrews – Represents Victoria Park Apartment Complex. 350 new users to neighborhood and excited by park design and access to river. Passive areas are wonderful and new rentals will use passive park and trail system.

Rebecca – Represents existing townhomes in Victoria Park. Thinks plan is fantastic and excited to see plan implemented. Wants magic wand to wave to make happen quickly.

Commented that it does not feel like the committee represented community as a whole. Emphasized need to pull greater representation in for future advisory committees.

Alice clarified a few items after going around the table for comments.

- Summarized reasons for flipping water feature and multi-use athletic field on north side. Multi-use field parallel to Nova creates barrier into site from Victoria Way. This is the direction most people from the neighborhood would access the site. Multi-use field would require fence due to close placement to roadway. Placement over existing storm water feature will triple water feature cost. Multi-use athletic field fits better parallel to Adrian Street.
- Clarified depth of water feature. Re-circulating channel is 6"-8" deep. Existing wetland is about 18" depth. Depth of existing pond will be reduced when remediation onsite is completed.
- Storm water is not being directed down the bluff. Storm water management proposed along the trails down the river bluff is to specifically deal with rain water that hits the trail surface and manage it down bluff.

Tonya asked that we show on the overall plan a division line down the railroad tracks with arrows denoting the Active Side and Natural Sides of the park. This concept has been at the forefront of our conversation and need to be reinforced in graphics.

Alice thanked committee for their time and work in development of master plan for Victoria Park. Explained idea of consensus requires that not everyone will get what they want, but that majority of Committee members supportive of master plan.

- Kent Petterson stated that he did not think we had consensus on master plan.
- Don Ganje stated based on committee's response, it appears we do have consensus.

Next Steps:

Staff to present summary of prioritization exercise. Conclude design advisory committee for development of master plan for Victoria Park.

Kent Petterson, Local Business Representative, requested the following comments be included in the Meeting Notes. These were submitted via email after the meeting on November 18, 2013

I see the prioritization was based on over twenty responses while it appears only 10 of 16 advisory members were present. I know a few of those people who attended had attended several meetings, but wonder how complete the information base was for everyone not on the advisory to complete an informed prioritization exercise. I personally did not realize that everyone was filing out the form as time was short during the meeting and we were being asked to respond on the fly with hardly any time to analyze the new plan. (Parenthetically, I would observe that we never get a chance over two consecutive meetings to be discussing the merits of same plan twice. It is always a moving target.) Can we get a break out of advisory member prioritization only? The ranking number results I would guess are averages. Was a mean analysis done? Perhaps that might

provide a more clearly differentiated set of rankings.

On the question of consensus, I am not going to get into a semantic argument, but find a declaration of such as troubling based on the lack of notice of that type of analysis being made. I understood staff was seeking further comment and clarification. Instead we're being 'tallied' by an unknown criteria. In my case the comments of record seem to indicate agreement, but for the record agreement was not my intent. I for one believe the plan is not finished.

Specifically, the bridge at the bluff ravine is an idea that was never discussed in a meeting. This bridge is a significant expense that as part of the exercise received a number one rating since it could be construed as part of the trail system. I wonder if that is how this bridge is viewed by staff and why it is there in the first place? My view is this bridge becomes a potential overlook, distracting us from the real overlook that must be negotiated at the bluff in the adjacent easement.

The water effect is an expensive priority that needs more work.

The playing field is not clearly portrayed or understood and needs more work.

The plan is too expensive and should be paired back to what is realistic so the park can be completed as soon as possible. If the advisory is viewed as proposing an expensive park, staff might delay it's implementation start until sufficient funds are available. This could be done based on the prioritization if better information can be teased out and on further discussions in the advisory is allowed.

I agree with the record comments of Pete Regnier that the advisory is the place these issues should be resolved. This kick the can down the road proposal to carve out three specific issues for some unknown future discussion is a waste of time and money to revisit issues that should be settled now when we have people assembled who are informed to complete the discussion and make a decision.

Bill Driver, Youth Recreation Representative, requested the following comments be included in the Meeting Notes. These were submitted via email after the meeting on November 20, 2013.

I support the multi-use athletic field on the north and the mowed turf open spaces on the south portion of Victoria Park. Artificial turf should be chosen for the athletic field given the intense use that it will receive by the general public and NOVA Academy. Natural grass would not be sustainable under those conditions.

The City does not have the resources to properly maintain natural grass fields especially at locations without on-site supervision to control access to the space. This is a major reason why the McMurray Fields at Como Park were converted from grass to turf.

Artificial turf is preferred over natural grass according to the Capitol Region Watershed

District representative to lessen negative environmental impacts on the adjacent wetland at Victoria Park.

Members of the Highland District Council have expressed a desire for the City to replace the athletic fields at the Hillcrest Recreation Center with artificial turf because of their poor condition. This is an indication of what eventually happens to natural grass fields in an urban environment.

The Boards of Directors of both the Saint Paul Association for Community Soccer and the Highland Groveland Recreation Association have endorsed artificial turf for the Victoria Park Athletic Field.

**Final Meeting: December 3, 2013 from 6:00 to 7:00 pm at
Nova Classical Academy**

Please contact Alice Messer at 651-266-6412 if any items are missing from the meeting notes or items were listed incorrectly.