

Monday, July 20, 2020 6:00 PM
CITY OF MINNETONKA BEACH
PARK COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Livingston Strong Playground Donation Proposal Information and Public Input Session
In-Person at Lafayette Club and Teleconference via Zoom

Roll Call: Park Commission Chair Joe Pagano, Moderator Bruce Palmer, Task Force Lead Davida Suiter, Livingston Strong Donor Lauren Livingston

Staff Present: City Administrator Pat Melvin, City Clerk Heidi Honey, Administrative Assistant Jane Burgess, City Engineer Darren Amundsen

Attendees signed in, in person or were noted on the Zoom call.

1. Welcome Comments - Pagano

2. General Housekeeping

3. COVID 19 Precautions

The Lafayette Club, city staff and the LMCC worked together on a COVID precautions for this meeting including requiring masks at all times and social distancing.

4. Goals of the meeting

4.1. Review and understand the Livingston Strong Playground Donation Proposal

The goal of the meeting is to hear and understand the proposal and to obtain resident input for the Park Commission's recommendation to Council.

4.2. Obtain resident input for the Park Commission recommendation to City Council

Pagano reviewed the history of this project and direction from council to date. On July 17, the city received the donation proposal and sent to the community and posted on the city website. Park Commission will begin evaluating the proposal on July 23.

5. Livingston Donation

Lauren Livingston stated that on August 12, 2019 they presented to council their idea to raise money for a playground to give back to the community. She reviewed the goals of the Livingston Strong group for a state-of-the-art playground – provide a playground set and permeable surface with ADA compliance and improved drainage so more of the park is usable. She is pursuing the Nature themed playground based on feedback. She then reviewed the layout and size. The proposed playground is 5' x 1' larger (18%) than the current playground and current swings would be incorporated. She would also like a gaga ball pit and a 3 ft by 3 ft sign naming the playground, not naming the park. Her proposal incorporates input from residents received so far.

6. Park Commission Task Force Findings

Suiter explained that the task force was formed to represent facts regarding Half Moon Park, create documents for future public input forums, and not take direct public input but find facts. Council directed the task forced to consult with Darren Amundsen as the expert in providing a drainage solution.

She reviewed the task force report in the packet which detailed the task force outcomes and meetings to date, drainage and its impact on the park and neighboring area, as well as playground components. The task force reviewed three playground options provided to them and most favored Option #2 “Nature” because it blends well with the natural aesthetics of Minnetonka Beach and provides more ADA options. Expense models will be presented to city council after public input is received.

City Engineer Darren Amundsen discussed drainage and reviewed his memo and drainage plan in the packet to improve the usability of green space at the park. Water would enter and exit the park in the same manner as today but there would be more usable green space. His plan allows the playground area to stay drier, water would flow to an area inside the tree line along Lafayette Rd. and go into a French drain to eventually dry that area. For a large rain event, pipes and drain tile are too small and would not be able to handle large amounts of water and the downstream system would handle small rain events as it does today. Amundsen then explained proposed elevation changes in areas of the park.

7. Public Input – Three minutes per person

Jill Bartel, 2106 Lake Rd – Bartel asked if the community will have an opportunity to view the final proposal with finances because packet materials are goals. Parks will meet to review the proposal, meet with council and they will give direction on steps after that. Pagano stated all expenses will be the responsibility of the donor. The drainage costs were needed for the donor to complete the proposal. Bartel stated that non supportive responses were primarily from people living near the park. She asked the location and size of the gaga pit. It would be adjacent to the playground and a 15 ft pit. Bartel recommended the gaga pit be at Ray Peters Park for older children to use it.

Alan Carlson, 2411 Woodwinds – Carlson expressed concerns that the proposal includes a 3’ x 3’ Livingston Strong sign. Livingston stated the proposal is dependent on naming the playground. Carlson discussed the city’s donation policy and what it allows for naming. He stated it makes a donation contingent upon no quid pro quo, so it does not permit granting naming rights. The city may provide for an unobtrusive 3” x 10” plaque. Carlson then discussed the \$130,000 donation and added that if these facilities are needed, the city will pay for them.

Jodi Schwendimann, Livingston Strong group -Schwendimann stated that residents who are opposed are concerned about noise levels but she does not see older kids using the gaga pit.

Jill Bartel stated that kids playing kick ball is a different level of noise than kids on a playground.

Dave Rogers – 2208 Huntington Pt Rd E – Rogers submitted a summary document as to why he thinks this will not work and why Ray Peters is a better location. Rogers then discussed the following concerns: higher costs than presented, drainage and a need for a full engineering study, future city expenses, liability if drainage solutions do not work, poured in place surface problems, parking, playground not fitting the neighborhood, and property values. He then discussed the ambiance of the vintage city.

Bruce Palmer stated that the Livingston family has asked the city to accept or not accept their donation in the way it is being offered. They are here to gather input.

Susan Carlson, 2411 Woodwinds – Carlson read a prepared statement. She is in favor of parks, playgrounds, and green spaces. She recommended placing the playground at Ray Peters Park because it is a more active park and have less impact on neighbors. Half Moon is a quiet park and she would like it to remain a passive park. The playground would be intrusive to many.

Vibhu Sharma, 2505 Lafayette Rd – Sharma expressed concerns about drainage at Half Moon Park and flooding problems in this area and on neighboring properties. The proposal does not include a proper engineering and environmental study and it should be required. He engaged a professional engineering firm, Westwood, and their letter which will be sent to the city. He believes a detailed plan must be meticulously followed. He asked council for a proper a study with remediation plans and peer review to be paid for by the Livingston Strong team.

Lisa Melamed, 2115 Huntington Pt Rd E – Melamed read a prepared statement which was in the packet. She thanked Lauren Livingston for the generous and thoughtful donation. She then stated this playground at Half Moon Park will create many issues for the neighborhood and the community She expressed safety concerns because the park is on a narrow, curved road which is dangerous for children with traffic. She then provided reasons for the proposed Livingston Strong playground to be at Ray Peters Park: it is not on a busy road, it is a larger area with parking, kids don't have to cross a street to get to it, and it is easily accessible by car and the new path.

Diane Rogers, 2208 Huntington Pt Rd E – Rogers served on the Park Commission 10-12 years. She discussed the Comprehensive Plan and the Met Council's authority stating that the Met Council is not a legislative body and their purpose is to ensure city parks do not infringe on regional parks. Rogers then stated that she was on the committee that put the drainage at Half Moon Park, and it did not work because it dried the area under the swing and made another area more wet.

Heather Ellis – 2327 Lafayette Rd – Ellis stated the intention is to work within the current footprint and current esthetic. She stated that Half Moon Park is easy to get to. Ray Peters is secluded, not easily accessible, and seems unsafe.

Dr. Steve Inglis – 2120 Huntington Pt Rd E – Inglis stated there are some concerns about health safety and poured rubber surfaces. He suggested the donation should have been a community garden at Ray Peters which would have been educational, served all ages, and had endless benefits.

Paige Renard – 2107 Hill Rd – Renard supporting the project happening at Half Moon. She expressed concerns about playground equipment at Ray Peters because it is an open playfield. Playground and tennis court was suggested in the past but turned down for good reasons.

Pagano explained that each park in the system has a specific purpose. Half Moon Park in the Comp Plan is a sanctuary for elementary and younger with a playground. Ray Peters has no designation in the current Comp Plan for playground.

Laura Inglis – 2120 Huntington Pt Rd E PRE – Inglis served on Park Commission 10-15 years. Inglis explained that when Ray Peters was redone, it was designed as a community park with a vision that it would have playground equipment and swings and that is what it says in the comprehensive plan. They ran out of money and there was a playground at Half Moon so there was no need for the playground. She expressed concerns about the safety at Half Moon because of traffic and went on to say she would not like to look at a gaga pit or hear the ball hitting the wood. She believes the new equipment at Half Moon in the 2024 Capital Plan is a placeholder and does not believe it is scheduled because at the last Parks meeting there were questions raised about replacing equipment and at the October Parks meeting, Half Moon was to be maintained. Inglis went on to say the Livingston proposal is not a free donation

due to increased maintenance costs. Half Moon is not an appropriate place. She warned against ignoring codes and policies and setting new precedents. She then asked residents to read the Comp Plan.

Blake Livingston, 2432 Lafayette Rd – Livingston stated that a gaga ball bouncing off boards does not make any noise.

Bennett Halverson, 2512 Shoreline Dr – Halverson stated that the playground and gaga pit should stay at Half Moon Park. The gaga pit should not be Ray Peters so families can stay together at one park. Ray Peters Park has college kids hanging out and he does would think it is as safe.

Blake Livingston – He stated that college kids are often at Ray Peters playing loud music and Ray Peters should stay as open green land. He stated his friends love both parks but Half Moon needs change.

Karin Dalsin, 1 Crescent street – Dalsin stated that Half Moon is not a serene, beautiful park. She sympathizes with people who don't want something that was not there already, but Half Moon does have a playground. She wishes all could see the good in what would come with this donation.

Julia Sharma, 2505 Lafayette Rd – Sharma stated that for 16 years, the park has been quiet. She discussed how this could have been handled differently and as adjoining neighbors they should have been contacted by the Livingston group. The task force did not discuss how the proposal would affect neighbors. She went on to say the adjoining neighbors have aesthetic, drainage and noise concerns that could have been discussed for a collaborative environment instead of a divided community. She then read the opening statements from the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Bridget Wortman, 2428 Lafayette Rd – Wortman stated the park was underutilized because it was wet. Half Moon is the park that already has playground and the donation is to upgrade the park so more people use it. Half Moon is safer because there are more people around and Ray Peters is geared toward open space and older kids. The proposal would not change the character of the neighborhood or attract people outside the city. Half Moon fosters a sense of community.

Liz Grabek, 2211 Shoreline Drive – Grabek stated that when they moved into the community everyone was very friendly and it was a great community, but they were surprised at the condition of Half Moon Park. It is very wet and a sub-par facility for this amazing community. The donation would create more green space and make the park more usable. She agreed that Ray Peters was not accessible and not as safe as Half Moon.

McKenzie Kramer, 2103 Hill Rd – Kramer stated that Ray Peters Park is a teen age hangout with loud music, non-residents use it and it is not safe to send your children there. She thinks Half Moon is underutilized and the street parking will encourage residents to use it.

Bruce Palmer, 3135 Lafayette Ridge Rd – Palmer asked if this was a complete playground donation or if the city get the money and be responsible for cost over-runs. Pagano stated the city would manage the \$130,000 donation and ensure all components are complete, but the city will not pay any costs. The Livingston Strong team has a buffer for contingencies within the \$130,000 donation. The expense model has not been reviewed.

Ann Brilley, 2478 Lafayette Rd. – Brilley asked for a definition of 2% green space adjustment in the packet. The current playground is 2,400 square feet and the proposed playground is 2,840 square feet. She stated this is bigger scale than a neighborhood park with the playscape being increased 18%.

Scott King, 2323 Huntington Pt Rd W – King asked where the water goes and its impact on neighboring properties during significant rainfalls and if a study can be done to determine the impact. Amundsen stated that water draining off of Half Moon goes northwest on to Lafayette Road and west toward the lake. Some off loads over land and to private storm sewer in back yards of Woodbridge Road properties, which was studied in the 2014 drainage analysis study. Amundsen explained that piped storm sewer systems are not used during major rain events and this project does not change where water goes during major rain events.

Jenna Guggisberg – 2603 Woodbridge – Guggisberg does not bring her young children to Half Moon because it is wet and dirty. She expressed disappointment that the city does not have better parks and City Hall park is also disappointing. She doesn't understand not wanting to improve the park and said the park is not used because it doesn't meet the needs of the children. The city needs to ask why parks aren't being used and how they can be used differently.

Susan Carlson read a statement from Kathy Gillum – Carlson read that the decision will be made on many elements and complexity. The city needs more than three days to assess this proposal and the process feels rushed. She agrees that several more meetings would be helpful regarding specific topics: location, surface options, safety of woodchip vs. PIP, engineering analysis, city signage policies and suitability of equipment.

Pagano stated the Park Commission is beginning the review process on July 23 and he is not sure how long to get a recommendation for City Council to make a final decision. It will be a thorough and deliberate review.

Eric Bender, 2412 Lafayette Rd – Bender asked if the current playground structure is going to expire. Pagano stated the life of a playground is 15-20 years and the current playground is 17 years old except for the swings. Bender then asked council to consider fact instead of opinion. He also said \$130,000 is a lot of money and the city should not be dismissive of that.

Diane Rogers, 2208 Huntington Pt Rd E – Rogers asked where water is going to go. Amundsen explained that the water will go near the trees and to a French drain. Livingston stated they considered not fixing drainage, but she is trying to fix the drainage based on feedback.

David Rogers, 2208 Huntington Pt Rd E – Rogers wants to be part of the process to make this work but has serious concerns about the costs and suggested a total cost analysis review to see if it can be done for \$130,000.

Eric Bender, 2412 Lafayette Rd – Bender stated discussed adding the money slated to update the park (\$50,000) to the \$130,000 donation. Pagano stated the city would not spend \$50,000 if the donation is accepted.

Scott King, 2323 Huntington Pt Rd W – King discussed flow grades and asked if the donation would pay for detailed engineering. It would be prudent for city to address drainage because it was not resolved.

Nell Mathews, 2643 Arcola Lane – Mathews recommended the entire Comprehensive Plan be looked at and stated the intention of the entire Comp Plan is to maintain and improve upon the community’s unique character. She then reviewed the Civic Mission Statement. Mathews discussed the importance of green space and that Half Moon used to be just green space with no equipment. Putting in equipment started the process of dealing with the drainage. Suggested the Park Commission address the following: if it is appropriate to expand the current playground 18%, if it is appropriate to have a gaga pit, and how to deal with drainage. She also discussed the necessity of parking. Only thing in considered to be added to Half Moon in the Comp Plan is trees.

8. Wrap Up

Pagano thanked everyone for participating.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE – The following people were noted on the zoom call: Dan Forbes, Gerald Anderson, Tyler Rabe-LMCC, Dennis Klohs, Terresa Mohr, Amy E., Judy Soukup, Scott King, Geraldine’s ipad, Bryan Halverson, Andrew Myers, Chris Dovolis, Kathy Gillum, Michelle Pohlada, Robert Gillum, Jodi Steinfeld, Joe Steinfeld, Liz Honey, Jodi Naylor, Chip Zawislak, Marianne, Carol Ryan, CMM, Carrie, Manuel Pinto, Lisa Melamed, 2911 Exch, Joanna Zawislak, Amber Arnold
See attached list for people who attended the meeting in person.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Honey, City Clerk