NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

DATE:      Tuesday, Sept 15, 2020
TIME:      7:00 PM
PLACE:     Anoka City Hall – Council Work Session Room
           2015 First Avenue, Anoka

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. APPROVE MINUTES

3. OPEN FORUM

4. NEW BUSINESS
   A. Anoka Conservation District
      a. Invasive Species Removal

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS
   A. Single Track Bike Trail – Anoka Nature Preserve
   B. Project Updates
      a. Rudy Johnson
      b. Akin Park
   C. West Rum River Trail
      a. Amphitheater
      b. Grant application status for tunnel project

6. COMMUNICATIONS
   A. General Updates

7. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING
   A. Aquatic Center Annual Report
   B. Amphitheater

8. ADJOURNMENT
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OF THE
ANOKA PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
TUESDAY, AUGUST 18TH, 2020
COUNCIL WORK SESSION ROOM OF ANOKA CITY HALL
2015 FIRST AVENUE, ANOKA MN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Nelson and Mark Beckenbach

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Tim Watson, Julie Huspek, Derek Sebesta, Joseph Anderla, and Mary Blankenship

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sam Scott and Terri Poe

STAFF PRESENT: Lisa LaCasse, Public Services Administrator and Jon Holmes, Public Services Supervisor

GUESTS: Michelle Trelstad and Kristin Keller

APPROVE MINUTES

There are no changes or corrections to the July regular meeting minutes. A motion was made by Beckenbach, seconded by Sebesta to APPROVE THE JULY 21ST, 2020 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD AS PRINTED.
7 AYES – 0 NAYS. Motion carried

OPEN FORUM
None

NEW BUSINESS

Community Education – Budget Request /Program Update
Kristen Keller and Michelle Trelstad from Community Education provided an update on the programs from 2019-2020. They were also asked to provide program updated, and highlighting anything new for the school year 2020-2021 budget request.

Trelstad expressed deep appreciation for their partnership with the City of Anoka. She explained that last spring their goal, when COVID was first learned about by the public, was to keep kids and families engaged with the community. Trelstad expressed their worries about the mental health of kids and the potential effects of being isolated in homes during the time of the initial
school closure order made by Gov. Tim Walz on March 15th, 2020. The district staff was quickly deployed to help with emergency childcare needed for Tier 1 workers, such as healthcare employees and teachers. Community Ed staff were reassigned to assist with the emergency childcare during this pivot period; they shared that the kids in care for the school day were still distance learning with their teachers, but there was a lot of hands on work, and one-on-one time with the children. For school year 2020-21 they do not have enough staff to provide the childcare that will be needed if they have to pivot back to distance learning. They are working on how to provide programs with COVID-19, thinking outside of the box. The funding the City provides helps to keep program costs low and provide transportation for the kids.

Keller spoke about the handout provided highlighting enrichment classes, activities, and athletics from fall 2019 and winter 2020. Some highlights mentioned; 972 elementary and 774 middle school students participated in the programs offered, 110 families attended the winter dance, the Leo Clubs at Franklin and Wilson raised $5,702 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society; and were able to provide 15 Wilson families with a thanksgiving meal basket, 72 children ages 4 to 6 played T-Ball, 168 students attended teen nights, and 142 community groups used facilities in the Anoka cluster. Keller explained that the Lions club has been working to have more involvement at Franklin and Wilson. They want to start a service club at Fred Moore. So far, 80 kids have signed up for fall T-Ball.

Trelstad shared that parents are excited to be able to engage their kids in something, especially with distance learning. She expressed how it was empowering to hear parents say they have been able to get their kids involved. Parents have expressed frustrations with distance learning like bandwidth speed, and needing to work from home while still trying to help their children with school. They have worked hard with the 6th grade transitions and how to welcome the children and providing a hook for positivity, since it is tough to get middle school kids involved in activities. We have been trying to understand what it is like to be 13 in 2020 with a pandemic. She went on to say how the Community Education building has been used for 33,000 hours by the community for different groups. On March 18th, they had to pivot and figure out if offerings could be online. Material kits for activities, like nature kits, the children watch caterpillar larvae grow into butterflies. “Shrek the Musical” at the Anoka Children’s Theater was highlighted for how much they are able to get kids involved, but they were never able to offer the final performances.

Keller shared findings of a comprehensive survey sent out in February for middle school students and parents, regarding sports at the middle school level. Highlighted findings; 1/3 of the students have participated in middle school athletics annually, with ½ participating sometime in middle school. The majority of parents feel there are enough choices of sports and programs and they want their child in sports to learn, make friends, and socialize. The students want more loosely structured opportunities. 13% of families felt the programs cost too much, Keller explained how they need to work on ways make people aware of financial relief that is available. She said that they are working to get a deeper understanding on how associations, kids, and parents to get more information on their opinions on middle school athletics offered. Trelstad added that Anoka district is one of the only districts left in the area to offer middle school sports, she feels it is crucial to offer these programs to the kids.

Keller shared how they will move forward in fall 2020. They will be offering a full slate of opportunities, hybrid and distance. She explained how the Hybrid model will work; Students will
be split alphabetically, Cohort A and Cohort B. Cohort A will go to school in person Tuesday and Wednesday, Cohort B will be in school Thursday and Friday. Monday will be a flex day for teachers.

Athletics will be offered for both cohorts on their chosen days. Athletics are going to intramural and will not be travelling to play against other schools or teams. E-sports, chess clubs, and babysitting classes will still be offered. Elementary programs will be more contained. We need systems in place to be able to transition quickly if at any point we need to switch to 100% distance learning. Keller expressed that they want to be part of the youth experience for Anoka Halloween. She asked LaCasse about Anoka Halloween and what is planned, LaCasse replied that we are still so much in limbo and we are working on multiple possible outcomes and are still waiting on Anoka Halloween’s final decisions.

Keller stated that they want to partner to improve the kids experience and serve them. Our goal is to provide equitable access to activities. They are happy to listen to any and all ideas about how the district can partner with the community. A shout out to Nickie for the work they did together on the DNR grant partnership with the library. They are cross promoting activities with the city, for example; Anoka has more snow shoes, so we can combine them to provide more resources.

Nelson asked if there are any questions about the budget figure for 2020-21. Trelstad said that Community Education has not had an increase in funding from the state since 1993, that they doing more, and more with less. They appreciate the partnerships as many communities around Anoka have had to raise costs of programs. The partnerships allow them to keep the costs low.

A motion was made by Nelson, seconded by Sebesta to APPROVE THE BUDGET REQUEST. 7 – AYES, 0 - OPPOSED. Motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Rudy Johnson
LaCasse reported that the irrigation system fully installed and operating. Hopko will be at the park tomorrow for seeding. Asphalt for the trail and hockey rink is laid, ready to move on to installing the rink boards and painting of the courts. LaCasse is working with the staff at the middle school to determine what court lines they would like. The school said they would start with a running unit until its ok for them to use the turf. LaCasse is working on getting the playground layout design finalized with Flagship Recreation. She said she had a plan set in place but found out that the cost of new additions did not include the cost of refurbishing of old equipment. In mid-September trees will be planted, that will be one of the last tasks to be done for 2020.

Amphitheater
LaCasse updated that they are speaking with Bolton & Menk. Based on recommendations from the MN Historical Society, LaCasse is recommending the City hire a historic Architect to re-evaluate the site, to decide if it is still eligible for listing based on its condition and character defining element. In a previous re-evaluation the retractable awning and steps were identified as the main points. This would be step 1 of the evaluation and could cost anywhere from $8,000-12,000.
LaCasse said that there are engineering/grant writing funds available for the Riverwalk project, this would be a good use for those funds so that they can keep moving with the process. The next step would be historic structure report that would identify what type of remediation/rehabilitation could be completed. When the amphitheater was listed nationally, it was in much better condition. LaCasse gave an example of what happened when road construction was happening by the mill ruins; in 2002 they were dug up, the 106 Group came out evaluated the findings and recommended the best way to preserve it was to cover it.

We could apply for a MN Historical Society grants for the 2nd phase evaluation. Beckenbach asked how much the report would cost. LaCasse was not sure at this point, but the grants available are anywhere from $10,000-50,000. LaCasse recommended following the steps outlined by the MN Historical Society for the best chance that all parties involved will be satisfied with the results and recommendations.

A motion was made by Blankenship, seconded by Anderla to APPROVE GOING FORWARD WITH FUNDING FOR THE AMPITHEATRE. 7 - AYES, 0 - OPPOSED. Motion Carried.

COMMUNICATIONS

General Updated
LaCasse sent out a handout to members of upcoming events and activities for the next couple of months. There are three more Wednesday night concerts and two Sundays, a couple of concerts were rescheduled due to weather. The End of Summer Bash at the Riverfront Memorial Park will be reduced to a band and a food truck or two. There are four movies in the park scheduled, partnering with Anoka Halloween for Cocoa and Gremlin for the October movies.

LaCasse updated on the waterfowl hunts scheduled. She welcomed the Park Board members to come out at any point during the WFW hunts to check it out. AR outdoors has requested to hunt as part of Youth Waterfowl Weekend and a second date on October 24th in the Nature Preserve, staff feels it is scheduled too close to the adult hunt held for WFW and is encouraging them to use Kings Island. Issues from last year with ARO reporting to LaCasse and the DNR have been resolved. The north blind at Kings Island has been moved and rebuilt, the new one is larger, about 10’x12’ and can easily accommodate an individual in a wheel chair plus two more hunters. Both blinds are available for people to use; staff is considering requesting reservations to be made.

She mentioned a nice email from a resident about staff’s fast response to clean up the storm damage at Sunny Acres over the past weekend. LaCasse said that people have not been reporting issues directly to our department but have been contacting council members instead. She said a push will be made in the City newsletter to ask the public to report vandalism, damage, and anything that doesn’t look right, anywhere in the City of Anoka to Public Services. She said instructions how to report findings will be provided, there are many different ways to report such incidents. The community needs to be our eyes as we are not able to be everywhere.

Nickie is working on planning on a Pickle-ball tournament and Bean Bag tournament for Halloween this fall.
ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Invasive Species Update
LaCasse updated that next month they will have the Invasive Species representative at the September and will talk about the Nature Preserve.

Blankenship asked about Halloween. LaCasse answered that the only plan is to run the Grand Day Parade, and cut the Night Parade and Kiddie Parade for Halloween 2020. She is still waiting on route plans, and a schedule from Anoka Halloween.

Blankenship asked about updated on the Aquatic Center. LaCasse reported that the Anoka County completed their final inspection for the year, and had determined that the COVID capacity limits were originally misinterpreted for Phase 3 of Gov. Walz Stay safe plan for MN. Anoka County asked for the capacity limit of the pool to be reduced to a maximum of 250 people. The pool will close on August 30th. Swim lessons are finished, there is only open swim and day passes are still being sold.

Single Track Bike Trail
No update

ADJOURNMENT
There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Nelson, seconded by Anderla to ADJOURN THIS REGULAR MEETING.
7 AYES – 0 OPPOSED

Time of adjournment 8:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa LaCasse
Public Services Administrator