

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Special Meeting – January 30, 2006

Pursuant to due call and notice, a special work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on January 30, 2006, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Lehmann presiding.

Council Present: Meuers, Lehmann, Markeson, Hellquist, Downs and Johnson. Absent: Erickson.

Staff present: Minke, Oakes, Albrecht, Freeberg, Felix and Murphy-Schuetz
Others present: Tim Browning, Tony Walzer and Rep. Frank Moe

Mayor Lehmann stated that the purpose of the meeting to discuss the upcoming trail issues at the legislature.

Heritage Preservation Commission

Motion by Markeson, second by Meuers, to appoint Paul Richards to the Heritage Preservation Commission. Motion carried.

Council Travel Authorization

Motion by Hellquist, second by Johnson, authorizing Mayor Lehmann and Councilmember Downs to travel to St. Paul for hearings on the trail on Thursday, Feb. 2. Motion carried.

Motion by Markeson, second by Hellquist, authorizing Council travel to the annexation hearing in Sartell on Feb. 1. Motion carried.

Minke reviewed the Paul Bunyan Trail connection handout.

History of Local Effort

Minke stated that the Paul Bunyan Trail Committee led by Jerry Downs was established in 2001. The Committee coordinated with local partners – DNR, VCB and Mn/DOT. The Committee recommendation a grade separated crossing and split trail option.

Legislative History

In 2005, the DNR received approximately \$1 million from LCMR and Bonding. In 2006, \$2 million for acquisition in bill by Rep. Moe (HF 2635) also in Senate by Senator Ruud. Parks & Trails Council has request in bills sponsored by Rep. Ozment and Senator Sams.

City Objective

Minke stated that the City objectives include completion of the Paul Bunyan State Trail, encourage appropriate commercial/mixed use lake oriented development, develop significant public (city-owned) parkland adjacent to the trail, and storm water management.

Trail Routing

Tim Browning, DNR Regional Manager, commented that one of the most significant changes is the attitude of the majority landowner in the subject area. The landowner has indicated an interest in selling and being a partner to address the lake-bed contamination issues. The DNR is intending to pursue a split trail, obtain an interest in the shoreline, and a separate although imbedded trail alignment on the lakeside. The trail along the lake would be a non-motorized alignment which would not allow ATV's or snowmobiles on shoreline but allow foot or wheeled non-motorized vehicles. The Department of Fisheries has expressed interest in preservation and restoration of shoreline. At this point the DNR is not looking at an exclusive use snowmobile trail. Browning stated that there are three major components – shoreline, trail alignment on the north through beach area and the southerly route earmarked for snowmobiles. Browning stated he has been identified as the acquisition project manager that will define exactly what is needed of the private landowners, pursue appraisals and move towards options.

Representative Moe commented that the \$2 million that is being asked from the legislature is in addition to almost a \$1 million that the DNR has on hand. He stated that he will need to be able to make the case for why an additional \$2 million is needed. He asked for an explanation of why it is going to cost \$3 million to acquire this property.

Felix commented that the appraisal value was \$2.6 million; the overall property value diminished it and came with a value of \$2.6 million to acquire this interest. Because of other issues it was recommended to add 20% to the funding bringing it up to \$3.12 million for this particular acquisition and bonding request.

Browning stated that it is not unusual for the DNR to move forward with a funding request and not know exactly what a project is going to cost. The DNR has a history of buying properties like this and can add supplemental information like the appraisal done in 2004, but the DNR thinks that the \$2 million will come close to being able to put the package together.

Minke asked Browning to explain how the width of the area needed by DNR for the trail.

Browning stated that the amount of shoreland that the Department of Fisheries & Wildlife would like to control in order to do their restoration is in the neighborhood of 50 foot plus. This is the zone the Fisheries feels is the most vulnerable in a shoreline. As far as trail corridor widths go, the DNR will need enough space to be able to construct a treadway but also manage what happens on the land immediately adjacent to the trail in order to control stormwater runoff, drainage and provide a buffer zone from neighboring properties. Walzer commented that treadway and corridor along beach area requires a 50 foot setback plus the treadway which will be 14-16 feet and a buffer zone. The wetland area will require a wider area of approximately 110-160 feet. DNR is reviewing what they will acquire.

Downs commented that it is a great tradeoff that the developer and DNR are working together on the lakebed cleanup.

Browning commented that the Parks & Trails Council are key players in just about everything the DNR does and he understands that they have generated their own proposal. He stated that the Parks & Trails Council are one of the best allies one could have.

Walzer provided a history of the Paul Bunyan Trail which was authorized by the State Legislature in 1988. This trail project has been ongoing for a long time and will continue to be ongoing.

Browning commented that the DNR will be identifying funding and the cost to do some preliminary sampling in the lakebed to determinate what is there and then a plan will be developed.

Minke commented that one of the Bemidji Destiny drivers is to have the cleanest urban lake in Minnesota. Clearly, there is an interest in the community taking proactive steps to clean up Lake Bemidji.

TH197 Crossing

Minke stated that currently in the City's 2006 bonding request requires \$500,000 city match. The crossing has a potential to dilute focus from the trail acquisition and there is no source for the \$500,000 match. There is a potential for state or federal funding in the future.

Lehmann commented that the bridge is worthless if there is no trail to go to. The bridge, as important as it is for the safety aspects, can happen at a future time because one can still cross at grade.

Representative Moe stated that it is important to continue to ask for the entire amount needed for land acquisition and the bridge crossing.

Felix commented that the Council will restate by resolution what their priorities are for the overall trail package to the legislature.

Councilmember Meuers left the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

Redevelopment of SE Lake Bemidji

Minke reviewed redevelopment of southeast Lake Bemidji which included community set expectations with 1999 plan – mixed use commercial lake oriented development. City can leverage funding and public interest and can use tools, i.e., TIF, brownfields funding and public support.

Parkland Acquisition

Minke noted that in the 1996 city comprehensive plan it called for “park development and walking/bicycle trails” if the Georgia Pacific plant relocated (page 90). Minke stated that the

Council priority of “city as a park” theme requires action to acquire parcels of significance when they are available.

Markeson asked if the City had the resources to purchase the land.

Minke stated that staff would find the money to get options on the property, which would allow time to do the groundwork for other funding.

Johnson commented that perhaps there are some parks that could be sold. Minke responded that the Parks & Recreation Commission have reviewed approximately a dozen parks to potentially sell off; at this point they felt it was premature to do this.

Markeson stated that he liked the idea of putting the park at the end of the area and perhaps less expensive at this location.

Next Steps

Consensus of the Council was to support the 2006 request for acquisition/improvement of the Paul Bunyan Trail. The priority of the trail crossing is secondary to the acquisition portion of the project.

Council suggested that a meeting be scheduled with trail supporters and stakeholders asking for their assistance with the legislative efforts. Downs stated that the Parks & Trails Council has told him is that we need to expand local trail supporters and stakeholders. Council asked staff to send invitations to encourage trail members, school district, Beltrami County, and Bemidji State University to attend Bemidji Capitol Day.


Downs asked the Council to consider a donation in the amount of \$2,500 be given to the Parks & Trails Council who has made the trail in Bemidji one of their top priorities. Motion by Johnson, second by Hellquist, to donate \$2,500 to the Parks & Trails Council with a check to present on February 2, 2006. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Downs, second by Johnson, authorizing staff to negotiate with landowners for City acquisition of parkland and explore funding options. Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Johnson, second by Hellquist, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Kay Murphy-Schuett
City Clerk