

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Work Session – October 10, 2011

Pursuant to due call and notice, a work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, October 10, 2011, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Larson presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Larson, Waldhausen, Hellquist, Johnson, Albrecht, Negard, Thompson

Staff Present: City Manager John Chattin, Parks & Recreation Director Marcia Larson, City Clerk Kay Murphy

Others Present: Jeff Schoenbauer, Schoenbauer Consulting; Amanda Prosser, Brauer & Associates

Parks Steering Committee: Muriel Gilman, Darlene Dorr, Matt Dyrdaahl, Don Heinonen, Karen Rivard, Dave Smith

Jeff Schoenbauer, Schoenbauer Consulting, stated that the purpose of the meeting was to summarize the parks plan focusing on the outcome of the open houses. He stated that a number of commonly held perspectives emerged from the focus group and public meetings, which included: 1) Parks, open space, and trails are all considered very important to the quality of life of the community. 2) The park and trail system is commonly considered to be a regional-level asset that has the potential to serve the local, regional and tourist populations. 3) Maintaining a quality park and trail system is critical to the long-term vitality and vibrancy of the city as a place to live, work and recreate.

Schoenbauer asked if there was any interest in expanding the outdoor ice rinks. Discussion followed regarding using existing outdoor facilities versus the addition of another facility. Schoenbauer stated that it is expensive to provide outdoor ice and recommended that the City monitor the usage.

Amanda Prosser, Brauer & Associates, provided an overview of the parks identifying the cornerstone parks. Parks recommended to be phased out include small neighborhood parks located at: 18th Street, 19th Street, 26th Street, Gemmel Avenue and Mississippi/1st Street. She stated that the rationale used to eliminate these parks was 1) nearby schools and other parks that can effectively service neighborhood areas; 2) sites offer limited development; and 3) parks have been a low priority for the last 10 years. She commented that amenities in any one of these parks would be expensive because of ADA requirements.

Schoenbauer stated that as the community expands it should think differently regarding greenways and natural amenities. Collaboration with developers will achieve the highest possible public values as development occurs in the growth areas. He noted that it should be consistent with the Greater Bemidji Joint Land Use Plan.

Discussion continued regarding the idea of an Indoor Neighborhood Park which came from several user groups. Schoenbauer stated that this will require a separate planning process but advised the Council not to sell the idea short. Councilor Hellquist commented that there can be health issues if the indoor park is not kept clean. Johnson stated that Menards has an indoor area which allows kids to play on equipment. Schoenbauer stated that there would likely be liability issues but it may be worth pursuing.

Prosser stated that the cost to improve parks is \$6.2 million to \$7.5 million. Prioritization is necessary and the Consultant recommended the following: 1st Tier - 1) Diamond Point Park – windscreen for large outdoor patio and fishing pier; 2) Paul Bunyan/Library Park – complete redevelopment and connection for pedestrians; 3) In-depth study for indoor park; and 2nd Tier - 4) Southshore Park – clean up of beach and 5) City Park – improve accessibility and expand skatepark.

Schoenbauer recommended that a master plan for the area from Library Park to the Southshore should be completed. He stated that this area has a regional and statewide draw which may work well for receiving Legacy money.

Neighborhood Park Improvement Priorities: 1st Tier - 1) Algoma Park – if park is turned over to the City by Northern spend approximately \$300,000 on improvements, 2) North Country Park – complete 2nd Phase, 3) N. Lake Irving Park – new development; and 2nd Tier – 4) Nymore Park – improve accessibility; 5) Cameron Park – improve accessibility.

Trails include destination trails, link trails, pedestrian-way/sidewalks and bikeways. Schoenbauer recommended that the focus be on quality trails versus quantity. The consultant recommended wayfinding and trailhead signs be added to existing trails. Schoenbauer stated that improvements to the trail system range from \$6 million to \$8 million which includes the cost of the Old Midway Bridge. Prioritization will be necessary as there are significant capital needs. Darlene Dorr commented that there is no access during the summer months to the bike trail on the east side of the Lake Bemidji. Consultant will explore with staff further. Discussion continued regarding whether the City had any interest in a BMX trail. Concerns regarding trail maintenance and location were expressed. Consultant will leave this option open.

Schoenbauer stated that recreation programs are important to the community as long as they don't duplicate what other groups are providing and they are affordable. M. Larson stated that the city currently gets \$20,000 from BC/BS towards its recreation programs.

Schoenbauer recommended that the City act as quarterback in developing an athletic council that could meet annually regarding facilities.

Schoenbauer stated that they will prepare the final park system plan for Council's approval.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Thompson, seconded by Hellquist, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Kay M. Murphy
City Clerk