

January 22, 2019

CITY OF WASHBURN PARKS COMMITTEE MEETING

6:30 PM Washburn City Hall

Present: Members: Jennifer Maziasz (council rep), Kyleleen Bartnick, Jamie Cook, Erika Lang, Wendy Reese

Municipal Personnel: Mayor Avol, City Administrator Scott Kluver, Assistant City Administrator Dan Stoltman

Excused Absence(s): None

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by Maziasz. Roll call attendance – all 5 Parks Committee members in attendance.

Approval of the November 20, 2018 Parks Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Reese; second by Bartnick. Motion carried unanimously and minutes were approved.

Review of Agenda

Discussion and Recommendation on Dog Park Location

As a follow-up from the November 2018 parks committee meeting, discussion continued about possible locations for the future dog park in the City of Washburn. Because Bartnick and Lang had visited the walking trail and adjacent areas along the lake as part of the process to update the walking trail maintenance plan, they offered perspective on possible locations for a dog park along the walking trail. These included a 1) A large field off of Holman Drive and 2) The recently mowed area at the end of Washington Avenue. Bartnick and Lang described the conditions of each site and potential pros and cons.

Large field off of Holman Drive - this is close to Thompson's West End Park and would be easy for residents and visitors to find. It is a high spot, dominated by grass. It is not a wet site and as such would require less maintenance. While it is near the walking trail, there is a buffer of vegetation between it and the trail, which is important for water quality protection and to help minimize potential conflicts between multiple users of the walking trail area. In this area, there are trees on the sides of the open area that could be used to provide shade and a picnic area. While there is no parking availability currently, there is space to create a few spaces. In terms of residential noise issues, there are a few houses nearby. This spot is currently used by the City for parking during Book Across the Bay. It could continue to be used for this, within and outside of the dog park fenced area. It is also an area that could be used for future rustic camping as identified by the master plan for Thompson's West End Park. Lang and Bartnick pointed out that there is another area along the trail that could be used for rustic camping instead should this area be used for something else.

Recently mowed area at the end of Washington Avenue - this is an area that is closer to the walking trail as well as a ravine. It would be easy for residents to find but perhaps a bit more challenging for visitors. It is a low area, and before it was mowed, vegetation was tag alder and red osier dogwood. There was standing frozen water observed in a couple of locations when Bartnick and Lang visited the site. If used for a dog park, vegetated buffers would need to be planted/improved to slow runoff and protect water quality. Additionally, site preparations would be needed to remove stumps and slash and to control re-growth of the shrubs. This area is closer to more houses and the trail than Area 1 which may result in conflicts among multiple users. A small parking area already exists next to this area. If the area isn't used for a dog park, it should be reseeded at the least as the ground was very disturbed during the mowing activities. Re-establishing vegetation is important for water quality, to slow the flow of water across the land, and to prevent invasive plants from seeding in. This should be addressed this spring, with plants arranged in such a way that there could still be a permanent view corridor (one that wouldn't need to be maintained through mowing).

A City property near the cemetery (Lot #19) was also further discussed. This lot has open areas as well as wooded areas that could support a small trail system. This site is near the Washburn School system's forest and its walking trails that many residents use.

It was pointed out that there are no developed utilities at any of these possible locations. Additionally, no existing plan mentions creating a dog park along the walking trail. To minimize potential future conflicts among users, the Parks Committee and dog park supporters may need to look harder at Lot #19 or even Lot #17, which is Hillside Park. Additionally, if along the lake is preferred, there might be parts of Lot #5 that would work which is near Thompson's West End Park. This area would need to be visited.

To include audience members, Bartnick made a motion to open to floor; second by Lang. Motion carried unanimously. Ursula Garrison introduced herself as a resident of the City of Washburn and a dog park advocate. She would like to see a dog park in the city, and believes it will help bring people together as well as benefit pets. She also pointed out that while the dog park will be used, it likely won't see a high volume of use. In terms of size, the bigger the better and it would be ideal to have a separate area for small dogs. She would prefer the first area off of Holman Drive if the dog park is near the lake. She pointed out that it would be beneficial to have a dog park near the lake, as there is a water source there, dogs can be washed off and cool off, and it is close to town making it easy for residents to walk to. People pointed out that a dog park near the cemetery might be harder for residents to get to, as they would have to walk up the hill, or they would have to drive.

For next steps, City Mayor Avol and City Administrator Kluver affirmed that City Council understands the community wants a dog park, and thinks that the City Council will be supportive. It would be best if the Parks Committee further fleshed out possible locations, and addressed some details. The Parks Committee should then choose the best site, and bring it to City Council with some details. Reese volunteered to work with organizers of the dog park to look harder at each of these sites and to come back with more details and recommendations.

Discussion and Recommendation on Updates to the Walking Trail Maintenance Plan

As a follow-up from the November 2018 parks committee meeting, discussion continued about possible locations for the future dog park in the City of Washburn. At this meeting, Bartnick and Lang were appointed to work on creating a framework for an update to the walking trail maintenance plan. Bartnick and Lang have visited the site a couple of times since November. During the Parks Committee meeting, they presented their observations, findings, recommendations, and next steps.

1. According to a past survey of City residents, the walking trail area is valued as a unique natural area; a place for education, quiet reflection, and exercise; access to the lakeshore; wildlife habitat; and minimal development.
2. There are 2 documents in existence that help guide the City in its management of the area.
 - A Management Plan with a Conservation Plan as an Appendix. The management plan was written in 2000. It includes natural resource recommendations including no mowing in ravines or on the banks or slopes unless at bench overlook locations and then in these view areas, only selectively limbing trees or shrubs is allowed; native plants only; mowing allowed up to 5 feet on either side of trail; signage allowed; and management responsibility lies with the Parks Committee and Public Works. The Conservation Plan provides further details to solve identified natural resource problems, including keeping vegetated buffers in ravines and on slopes and incorporating native plantings.
 - An Action Plan which is a 3-year maintenance schedule for mowing, trimming, and planting.
3. Management plans aren't meant to be static, and these plans haven't been updated for many years. Updating also gives an opportunity to assess what is working or what isn't working, and what additional info needs to be included.
4. When visiting the walking trail and adjacent areas, Bartnick and Lang observed several things: vegetation isn't just being limbed selectively along steep slopes and ravines, and recent mowing activities caused a lot of ground disturbance and areas are in need of reseeded and some restoration; some infrastructure is wearing out and in need of repairs; there are invasive plants present and these aren't being controlled or removed; some mowing on the sides of the trail is occurring which helps keep invasive plants controlled and also may help people feel safe; and key view corridors already exist and can be maintained in the future in a way that possibly needs less time and resources.

Bartnick and Lang then recommended the following framework/next steps:

From February - April 2019:

- Identify and Solicit feedback from natural resource scientists/experts in various fields to help the City achieve goals in existing plans.
- Discuss Recommendations with Public Works Department

By mid-April 2019:

- Create one plan document that includes applicable existing plan(s) info as well as additional information and recommendations.

April and May 2019:

- Parks Committee vetting and recommendation of plan to City Council

June 2019:

- City Council review (and hopefully approval) of updated plan

The following additional points were made:

- Parks Committee members should keep the plan realistic
- Public Works staff who help with this work will likely need some level of training
- It might be best to make the plan 4-5 years in length

Future Topics

Identify needs and next steps to begin addressing these needs (i.e. implementing activities) at Memorial Park and Thompson's West End Park as follow-up to the presentation made by the campground managers last year.

Adjourn

Motion made by Reese to adjourn meeting at 7:56 pm, second by Cook. Motion carried unanimously.