



Council Worksession

June 14, 2022

5:00 pm

Present: Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas (attending remotely)  
Councilmember Abdullahi Abdulle (attending remotely)  
Councilmember Graeme Allen (attending remotely)  
Councilmember Pam Axberg (attending remotely)

Absent: Councilmember Emily Dunsworth

Staff in Attendance: Devin Massopust, Jennifer Fink, Gina Foschi

Guests in Attendance: Candace Amberg, WSB

Parks Comprehensive Plan Update

Massopust reported the Council requested periodic updates on the implementation of the Comprehensive Parks Plan and this meeting will be the first of such updates. He reported Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Fink will be discussing the status of the Parks Comprehensive Plan project implementation.

Fink provided the Council with background information on the Parks Comprehensive Plan noting in 2018 the Council authorized staff to work with WSB on this plan. She explained the plan was approved in 2020 and \$10 million in abatement bonds were approved in July of 2021. She noted the City has three years to spend these bonds. She reported the City has identified six target parks. She commented further on how costs have increased since the comprehensive plan was written in 2019. She discussed the work that was being planned for Sunny Square Park, the Lions Park splash pad, Hansen Park East and the tennis courts at Hansen West. She commented on grant funds the City had received for Hansen Park. She reviewed where each park was within the design phase and noted Sunny Square Park would begin construction in August. She further discussed the website WSB had created for the City's upcoming park projects and noted how the public can provide the City with feedback.

Councilmember Abdulle recommended a link for this new website be placed on the City's website.

Fink reviewed the numbers for Sunny Square Park noting only one contractor can deliver within the City's timeline but was pleased to report this vendor was a Minnesota owned business. She estimated Sunny Square costs came in 15% over the original estimate. She reported the City would be receiving a \$300,000 grant from the DNR for Totem Pole Park, which would greatly assist the City. She thanked Candace Amberg from WSB for her assistance with the grant writing. She discussed how the City bonded for park improvements and explained these \$10 million on bonds had to be spent in the next three years. She commented further on how adjustments could be made to the plan noting the Council could elect to hold off on projects, or could allow for park projects to continue with the understanding adjustments to the plans may be required. She believed it was important to keep moving projects forward because projects would not become less expensive. She reported staff would continue to check in with the Council to provide project updates.

Councilmember Abdulle asked if the 15% increase was for all of the planned park projects. Fink reported this was just for the bid for Sunny Square Park.

Councilmember Abdulle questioned if the City accounted for the potential grants. Fink explained the City accounted for the \$250,000 that was received for Hansen Park, but noted the \$300,000 for Totem Pole Park was not included in the plans. She indicated these dollars would assist with keeping the overall plan on track.

Councilmember Abdulle commented on the cost of waiting noting costs will continue to go up. He supported the City staying the course and thanked staff for pursuing additional grant funding in order to assist with the overall park improvement plans.

Councilmember Allen thanked staff for the update on the parks improvement projects. He commended staff for continuing to pursue grants. He thanked the finance department for all of their excellent work and for keeping an excellent bond rating.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned if the City could move faster on these projects, given the fact costs are not going down. Fink stated staff has not considered this because the City does not want to take all of its major parks offline all at once. She commented on how this would impact City sponsored programming. She noted the tennis courts were moving up on the project timeline because staff believes this project needs to be addressed earlier.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked staff for the response and stated this made sense. She thanked continuing to pursue additional grants to assist with completing the City's vision for its parks.

Councilmember Abdulle stated it would be helpful for the Council to learn more about the overall parks program with an over/under. He hoped that the economy and inflations would stabilize going forward.

Worksession adjourned at 5:38 pm

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Terri Spangrud".

Terri Spangrud  
City Clerk