

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a joint meeting of the Council and Park Board in and for the City of Albany, Stearns County, Minnesota, was called to order by Mayor Tom Kasner at 5:30 o'clock in the evening on Wednesday, January 18, 2023, in the Council Room at 400 Railroad Avenue for the said City.

Other Council members present were: Councilors Keith Heitzman, John R. Harlander, Adam Rushmeyer, and Al Amdahl. None were absent for the meeting. Other Park Board members present were: Ross Voit, Chairman, Sonya Hoffarth, and Grant Johnson.

Other's present were: Tom Schneider, Clerk/Adm., Joe Mergen, Supervisor, Public Works Department, Tim Hennagir, Staff Writer, the Star Post, and Jeremy Mathiasen, the city Engineer with the firm Stantec, Inc., St. Cloud, MN. Others present were: Bruce Winter, Berleen Winter, Marcia Winter, Kurt Pelzer, Travis Okerlund, Superintendent Albany Area Schools, Cassie Novak, Director of Albany Area Community Education, Taryn Hollenkamp, Don Fischer, Bryan Schiffler, Tom Blattner, Rick Christensen, Rod Gerads, John Greer, Dick Glatzmaier, Deb Sabrowsky, Stacy Kirby, Nick Schiffler, Earl Felling, Deborah Sand, LeRoy Sand, Dalton Herzog, Robert Havard, Christy Higgins, Pat Higgins, Bill Scepaniak, Teresa Scepaniak, Ray Marosek, Betty Marosek, Don Fischer, Frank Haynes, James Beuning, and Judy Beuning. High School students present were: Reagan Berg and Gretsch Brown.

Mr. Mathiasen appeared before the council, Park Board, and members for the public to present information relating to a proposed pedestrian walk/bike trail along the eastern boundary of North Lake abutting State HWY238 (TH238) connecting North Park to an existing sidewalk on Lake Avenue. Mr. Mathiasen noted the following:

- The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is the lake authority with jurisdiction over North Lake's water levels and impacts.
- The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has right of way and expressed interest in working with the city and property owners to better establish TH238 right-of-way or corridor.
- Steep slopes and limited right-of-way including the impact to North Lake will make the construction of a pedestrian trail challenging.
- Alternate routes or options for a pedestrian trail:
  - East side of TH238 between North Park and Lake Avenue
  - West side of TH238 between North Park and Lake Avenue
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue west of North Park, 5<sup>th</sup> St., 6<sup>th</sup> St., Forest Avenue to include sidewalk construction connection to the school's west entrance on TH238

Mayor Tom Kasner opened up the meeting for comments from the public and the following were received:

Marcia Winter noted if a pedestrian trail is constructed on the east side of North Lake there should be adequate separation between the trail and traffic on TH238; whereby safety of the trail users is the number one priority.

Bruce Winter questioned what is the cost of each alternative being presented. Mr. Mathiasen noted his engineering firm has not prepared a feasibility study and only had discussions with the DNR and MnDOT, but the first step was to hold a public informational meeting to determine if there is an interest in moving forward with the project.

Stacy Kirby noted she has visited other cities where pedestrian trails have been constructed adjacent to waterways and/or lakes which should be reviewed to assure proper construction.

Trent Blais noted he recommends the trail be constructed on the west side of TH238 and is not in favor of the other two options.

Bryan Schiffler appeared before the public to inform everyone in attendance he and his team of interested investors would construct the proposed pedestrian trail at no cost to the tax payers and no public funding would be requested. Mr. Schiffler noted the proposed trail would connect the new Early Childhood Learning Center and North Park, to the school campus. Mr. Schiffler questioned if those in attendance see any value in a pedestrian trail on the east side of North Lake and if so, efforts will be made to minimize the impact to North Lake.

Berleen Winter recommended the trail be open during the winter months. Mr. Harlander noted it would be impossible to have the city clear snow from the trail on a regular basis due to lack of employees and snow being deposited on the trail from TH238 roadway several times during and after snowfall events.

Don Fischer questioned if the Park Board has funds to pay for future maintenance of the trail. Mayor Tom Kasner noted the design and construction of a trail has not been approved and it has not been determined how much money should be set aside annually for future maintenance.

James Beuning questioned how wide is the sidewalk width for one of the pedestrian trail options shown on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, 5<sup>th</sup> St., 6<sup>th</sup> St., and Forest Avenue. Mr. Mathiasen stated an eight-foot-wide sidewalk is proposed on the south side of Forest Avenue between 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Street which is included in the plans for the 2023 Capital Improvements Project, but a typical sidewalk width is five feet.

Betty Marosek noted she is not in favor of any proposed trail options where a sidewalk abuts private property and is only in favor of the trail shown on the west side of TH238 along the eastern shoreline of North Lake.

Teresa Scepaniak noted the following: 1) they own property which partially lies in North Lake or west of TH238, 2) TH238 is extremely dangerous for pedestrians, 3) is in favor of a trail on the west side of TH238, and 4) who will pay for future maintenance of the trail.

Ray Marosek noted nobody should compare the trail in Vergas, MN to the proposed trail around North Lake due to difference is wildlife, lakes, and other habitat; whereas the city needs to consider the least disruption to wildlife if the trail is constructed on the west side of TH238. Mr. Marosek also noted he is not in favor of any property tax increase.

Ken Burr questioned what precautions are to be considered for snowmobile use on North Lake or signage to avoid someone from getting injured if a boardwalk or trail is constructed on the lake.

Rod Gerads noted he is concerned about the cost for future maintenance of a trail and is opposed to paying any additional property taxes.

Ashley Clapp, informed the council there will be no increase in property taxes for the construction of a trail and the Albany Jaycees can provide funding for future maintenance having funded many improvements within the city in the past. Ms. Clapp requested the city move forward to develop a construction plan to a trail along the eastern shoreline of North Lake.

Bryan Schiffler informed the council and public his team of investors will only support a trail on the west side of TH238 and is not interested in funding the other two options for trail alignments.

Shirly Burr noted she is also concerned about who will pay for future maintenance of the trail.

Frank Haynes noted pedestrian trails in communities is a great benefit for use by individuals of all ages and is in favor of providing trails for the public.

LeRoy Sand noted he is opposed to a trail on the east side of TH238.

Kurt Pelzer noted he is in favor of a trail on the west side of TH238 and if constructed, safety of trail users should be a high priority and the current use of TH238 by pedestrians is extremely dangerous.

John Greer informed the council a pedestrian trail around North Lake is a wonderful amenity and if constructed properly, everyone would enjoy the scenery and uniqueness of North Lake.

Earl Felling noted he is in favor of the trail on the west side of TH238, but maybe a guard rail or barrier of some type be installed to improve safety.

Mayor Tom Kasner thanked everyone for attending the meeting and providing valuable information for the city engineer, city staff, council, Park Board, and Mr. Schiffler's team to review. Mayor Tom Kasner noted the consensus of the council, Park Board, and members of the public present for the meeting is to consider the trail alignment on the west side of TH238 between North Park and connecting to an existing sidewalk on Lake Avenue including how to fund costs related to future maintenance of the trail.

Mayor Tom Kasner presented to the public a concept drawing prepared by Bryan Schiffler showing proposed future recreational activities or amenities to be constructed in North Park. Mayor Tom Kasner opened up the meeting for comments from the public and the following were received:

Bruce Winter noted he likes the proposed layout of future recreational activities in North Park.

Bryan Schiffler noted the proposed layout is just a concept and prepared the sketch to seek input from the council and Park Board what they would like to see for future park improvements.

Trent Blais noted he enjoys playing disc golf and recommended the course be redesigned so not to interfere with proposed future activities, but the proposed improvements will require significant maintenance.

Kurt Pelzer noted a splash pad is very expensive to maintain.

Ross Voit, Chairman of the Park Board, noted a splash pad is not environmentally friendly being several million gallons of treated water is flushed down a storm sewer pipe and only in use for a few months during the summer. Mr. Voit noted if new activities are added in North Park, many mature trees would need to be removed and there are some residents that prefer green areas in a park.

Berleen Hollenkamp noted there are residents in the community that don't know where North Park is located.

Frank Haynes questioned if the proposed North Park concept plan a wish list or is the community education program in need of additional amenities to support their program.

Cassie Novak informed the public soccer is a growing sport and there is a need for soccer fields and recreational activities that support younger children.

Stacy Kirby noted she is in favor of a splash pad and new skating rink facilities in North Park and prefers not using the skating rinks on North Lake due to ongoing poor ice conditions.

Ken Burr noted poor soils and storm water ponding east of the hospital/clinic is not conducive for any permanent structure or park improvement. Mr. Burr also noted the proposed concept plan for future activities has too many improvements and against any trees from being cut down.

Shirly Burr questioned the liability of a splash pad and prefers a lot of green space in a park.

Chrissy Higgins noted she would like to see a dog park and the proposed concept plan looks great.

Councilor John R. Harlander noted the proposed pedestrian trail west of TH238 is the best option, but the city will have to explore how funds need to be raised to pay for future maintenance of the trail and any new park improvements.

Robert Havard noted he is opposed to trees being cut down near his property and questioned how close to his property the proposed park improvements would be constructed. Mr. Havard also noted he is concerned about noise for those participating in park activities near his residence.

Councilor Adam Rushmeyer informed the public he is encouraged to see how many individuals are in attendance and who provided comments, but cautioned everyone; whereby there is much planning by the Park Board and council that still needs to be done to determine what amenities are actually needed.

Mayor Tom Kasner thanked everyone for attending the meeting and providing input regarding the proposed concept plan prepared by Mr. Schiffler's team. Mayor Tom Kasner noted the city engineer, city staff, and Mr. Schiffler's team will review the proposed concept plan and determine how to proceed knowing the consensus of the council and Park Board is that additional amenities in North Park is something that may be accomplished with proper planning.

Mayor Tom Kasner adjourned the meeting at 7:00 PM.

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Tom Schneider  
Clerk/Adm.