

**REGULAR ANDOVER OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING
MARCH 9, 2022
MINUTES**

The Regular Meeting of the Andover Open Space Advisory Commission was called to order by Chairperson Kim Kovich at 6:00 p.m., at the Andover City Hall, 1685 Crosstown Boulevard NW, Andover, Minnesota.

Commissioners present: Erik Lindberg, Ryan Ingebritson, Jen Vedadi (by phone; non-voting), Jim Olson, Jonathan Gwinn, and Jamie McGowan
Commissioners absent: None
Also present: Kameron Kytonen, Natural Resources Technician

RESIDENT FORUM

No one wished to address the Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 8, 2021

The December 8, 2021 minutes were approved as presented.

WELCOME TO NEW COMMISSIONERS

Chair Kovich welcomed the two new members of the Commission.

DISCUSS RENAMING OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMISSION TO ANDOVER NATURE PRESERVE COMMISSION

Mr. Kytonen stated that there was a suggestion from the City Council to rename the Open Space Advisory Commission to the Nature Preserve Commission. He explained that the properties were originally called open spaces but were renamed to preserves a few years ago and therefore it would seem to make sense to rename the Commission in the same manner.

Chair Kovich agreed that the change would make sense and be more self-explanatory.

Commissioner Olson arrived.

Commissioner Olson asked if there would be any issues with changing the name of the Commission.

Mr. Kytonen stated that he did not notice anything in the bylaws that would create a problem and the Council believed it would be a simple change.

Chair Kovich noted that the original funds were allocated to the Open Space Advisory Commission. He stated that the bonds have now become due and therefore there could be

money available for use and wanted to ensure that the name change would not impact any potential available funding.

Mr. Kytonen commented that should not be an issue.

Commissioner McGowan asked if there are any other open spaces in Andover. She asked for background information.

Chair Kovich provided a brief summary of background information on the original allocation of funds to purchase the open space parcels and the process that was followed to purchase the properties. He noted that the Commission has now been tasked with managing those areas. He confirmed that all of the properties managed by the Commission have been changed in title from open space to preserves.

Motion by Commissioner Ingebritson, Second by Commissioner Lindberg, to rename the Open Space Advisory Commission to the Nature Preserve Commission. Motion passed 6-0 (1 present).

DISCUSS STATUS OF PROMOTION IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE NATURE PRESERVES (“GET OUTSIDE” CAMPAIGN)

Mr. Kytonen stated that this concept was brought forward by Commissioner Vedadi as a way to introduce more people to the preserves, focusing on children and families. He provided details on a potential partnership with the Davinci Academy and noted that there was a meeting with representatives from the school, Commissioner Vedadi, and himself.

Commissioner Vedadi commented that the school was open and seems excited about the partnership. She stated that the school would provide a teacher, or possibly two, which would allow for up to 26 children. She stated that the school would also provide busing once or possibly two times for the class. She stated that the session would be four days with 5.5 hours of instruction each day. She stated that the school has asked the group to assist with themes for each day and activity or learning topics/resources. She stated that if that information is provided by the 21st, the school would have time to develop promotional materials. She stated that since that meeting, they have shared resources and ideas. She asked if anyone else from the Commission would like to join in on the planning.

Commissioner Gwinn provided details on a wildlife outreach program through Anoka County and Connexus Energy which would provide a facilitator for a few hours which could help to give the person(s) leading the group a little break.

Commissioner Lindberg asked the role the Commission would play in this.

Commissioner Vedadi stated that they talked a lot about that during the meeting. She stated that the first task would be to help shape ideas for the program. She stated that there was also discussion of having Mr. Kytonen and some members of the Commission present onsite to provide input and assist with the program. She stated that they also discussed cross promotion.

Commissioner Gwinn stated that they also discussed a brief outline for different activities to be provided by the 21st.

Chair Kovich stated that there are four days of the session and asked if there would need to be a different theme for each day.

Commissioner Vedadi confirmed that the desire would be to have different themes for each day centered on the environment. She provided an example of birds noting that children could watch a video identifying different birds, then take that knowledge into the field to identify birds and follow that up with a related art project.

Chair Kovich stated that if there is busing for two days, perhaps there are visits to two different preserves. He stated that the theme and activities could be tailored to what exists in the specific preserve.

Commissioner Vedadi stated that they discussed Northwoods and Maple View to get the most out of the busing if there is only one day for buses. She noted that they could tie into the different activities that occurred in the classroom when in the preserves. She stated that ideally, she would envision identification on potential themes for each day with related activities and the estimated length of time for each activity. She noted that they could also include other ideas that could be reviewed by the school. She stated that those that have been working on this could package the work that has been done thus far into an outline format for the Commission to review via email. She stated that the members of the Commission could then provide any additional ideas they may want to include.

Mr. Kytonen asked if any other members of the Commission would like to be part of the planning that is occurring for this program. He noted that Commissioners Vedadi and Gwinn would continue to be a part of this and advised that he would continue to be involved as the staff liaison along with the CFC member that has been working with the City.

Commissioner Ingebritson stated that his wife works at Rum River Art Center and as part of their summer camps they incorporate nature photography and sketching. He asked is Davinci is involved in arts and perhaps that could be an activity within the preserve.

Commissioner Vedadi confirmed that the school is focused on arts and science and therefore that would be a great idea. She asked if the art center would be willing to provide a staff member to assist.

Commissioner Ingebritson confirmed that he could check with his wife to see if someone would be available and to gain additional input on ideas and materials.

Commissioner Vedadi stated that additional work would be done on the curriculum in early April once they know which programs the children choose to sign up for.

Chair Kovich confirmed that Commissioner Vedadi and Mr. Kytonen would continue to work on this to provide the outline for the Commission to review and submission to the school by the 21st.

Commissioner Gwinn suggested that the outline be done in a Word document or Google document to allow modifications.

Mr. Kytonen reviewed the timeline for Commissioner Vedadi to provide the draft outline to the Commission by the following Thursday in order to submit to the school.

Commissioner Vedadi stated that she circled back to the Anoka County Historical Society after the last meeting related to the self-guided walking tours to provide an update that the Commission was interested in possibly moving forward on that in the fall. She noted that the Historical Society was supportive of that timeline and would still be interested in collaborating.

Mr. Kovich thanked Commissioner Vedadi for taking the lead on these ideas.

DISCUSS STATUS OF POTENTIAL CROSSING AT DALSKÉ WOODLANDS

Mr. Kytonen stated that this has been an ongoing item for years and provided a brief background for the benefit of the new members of the Commission. He stated that the Commission has not yet been successful in obtaining grant funds to create a crossing that would make the entire preserve accessible. He provided details on a grant opportunity through the DNR, noting that he has sent the preliminary application to be reviewed. He stated that the boardwalk was included in the 2026 CIP for the City but acknowledged that it would be nice to have the crossing before that time. He estimated a cost of \$50,000 to \$100,000 for the boardwalk crossing.

Commissioner Lindberg asked when the grant awards would be made.

Mr. Kytonen believed that grants are awarded in July, noting that if the City receives the grant, construction could possibly begin in September or October.

Commissioner Ingebritson asked for more details on the process and anticipated length.

Mr. Kytonen stated that the engineering firm does understand that the grant application is due in three weeks. He stated that if the grant is not awarded, it could be a few more years before there would be funding for the boardwalk as schedule in the CIP. He noted that the City could also reapply for the grant in the next cycle if not awarded this year, or the Council could choose to move the project up on the CIP.

Commissioner Olson asked if the Commission would meet with the engineering firm before a recommendation is made in order to provide input.

Mr. Kytonen stated that there was a meeting about a month ago. He noted that there would be another meeting after the findings are developed.

Chair Kovich stated that this has been an ongoing issue, noting that what the Commission wants and what the Council wants may not be the same. He stated that the Commission does not want a giant boardwalk or something similar to the Crosstown boardwalk as that would not be responsible use of tax dollars for a preserve that has a limited number of visitors. He stated that the Commission instead desires something simple that would be low impact and low cost.

Commissioner McGowan asked who maintains the trails and land.

Chair Kovich noted that this is a nature preserve and not a maintained park and therefore the crossing should fit that character. He stated that the parks staff does maintain the trails within the preserves.

DISCUSS POTENTIAL MEETING DATES FOR THIS YEAR

Chair Kovich stated that the Commission has attempted to meet four times per year with this being the first meeting of the year. He suggested that the Commission meet on May 4th, August 3rd, and October 5th. He confirmed that the group would like to complete a tour of a preserve prior to each of those meetings.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Gwinn stated that he would like input from the Commission on a unique way for funds to be generated to purchase, or create, additional preserve space without raising taxes. He stated that many residents are concerned that the natural areas in Andover are being lost to development. He presented different ideas that could be used to obtain land set aside for open space or to generate funds through new development, similar to park dedication.

Mr. Kytonen stated that he had a conversation with the City Administrator on these concepts. He stated that another option to generate funds for preserves would be through referendum or through the platting process. He stated that donations could also be used to raise funds. He stated that this has been discussed at previous joint meeting with the City Council, although it has most likely been three years since the last discussion.

Commissioner Ingebritson stated that during the last workshop with the City Council there was discussion of planning and zoning keeping the Commission more in the loop on development opportunities.

Chair Kovich suggested that this item be added to the next agenda for continued discussion. He suggested that Commissioner Gwinn reach out to the City of Blaine to gain more information on how that community has implemented similar funding sources for the preservation of open space.

Commissioner Olson commented that there is a lot of traffic moving through FunFest which makes it a good opportunity to speak with residents and promote the preserves.

Mr. Kytonen stated that currently this group only manages the four nature preserves. He noted that during the last joint worksession with the Council there was a suggestion that the Commission also manage the passive parks. He provided an example of a passive park which does not have trails, features, or signage. He estimated about 12 passive parks.

Commissioner McGowan commented on the popularity of nature play and stated that the passive park setting would be perfect for those activities.

Mr. Kytonen confirmed that they could also add trails or other activities in those areas. He noted that this suggestion is going to be reviewed by the Park and Recreation Commission at its meeting next week.

Commissioner Gwinn commented that the preserves are strictly nature trails and no other features. He asked if the passive parks could be a hybrid concept that could have other elements.

Chair Kovich suggested that this be discussed at the next meeting and suggested that more information be provided including locations.

Mr. Kytonen stated that the concept is going to be discussed by the Park and Recreation Commission at its meeting and if there is support, it would be brought to this Commission for formal consideration.

Commissioner Lindberg commented that he supports the idea and liked the idea of pursuing something like the nature play concept suggested.

Commissioner Ingebritson stated that he also supports this idea and would find it helpful for staff to provide a map with the different locations.

Mr. Kytonen stated that the passive parks would not have the restrictions that the nature preserves have, therefore more ideas could be explored.

Commissioner Olson stated that the mentality of the parks department typically centers around swings, slide, etc. He believed that they would need to differentiate what they would be thinking to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Commissioner Gwinn asked if there would be a way of putting some type of restriction to prevent development into a full park in the future.

Chair Kovich confirmed consensus of the Commission to pursue management of the passive parks if that becomes an option.

Mr. Kytonen advised of a Rare Plant Rescue program offered by the Anoka Conservation District. He explained that there are some rare plants on property that is going to be developed that could possibly be relocated to a nature preserve.

Chair Kovich stated that there is a piece of park land adjacent to Martins Meadows nature preserve which would provide a great opportunity for a canoe landing. He noted that type of activity would not be allowed within the preserve, but the park land would not have the same restriction.

Commissioner Lindberg stated that he would support the rare plant program, noting that placing the plants in a nature preserve would provide an opportunity for those plants to thrive.

Chair Kovich confirmed the consensus of the Commission to support the rare plant program. He asked staff to provide an update on recent activity in each of the four preserves at the next meeting.

Mr. Kytonen advised of the North Suburban Home Show which will take place this weekend, noting that the City will have a natural resources booth.

a. Next Meeting: May 4, 2022

Noted.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Ingebritson, Second by Commissioner Lindberg, to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 p.m. Motion passed 6-0 (1 present).

Respectfully submitted,

Kameron Kytonen
Natural Resources Technician

Drafted by:
Amanda Staple, Recording Secretary