

***REGULAR NATURE PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING
AUGUST 10, 2022
MINUTES***

The Andover Nature Preserve Commission held a walking tour at Dalske Woodlands, 400 181st Avenue NW, prior to the meeting beginning at 5:00 p.m.

The Regular Meeting of the Andover Nature Preserve 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: Jonathan Gwinn, Ryan Ingebritson, and Jamie McGowan
Commissioners absent: Erik Lindberg, Jim Olson, and Jen Vedadi
Also present: Kameron Kytonen, Natural Resources Technician

RESIDENT FORUM

Sandy Callen, partner in the Holasek property, stated that her father was on the Open Space Advisory Committee for many years from its creation through September 2010. She noted that her father passed away in 2011.

Chair Kovich stated that he and Commissioner Olson both worked with Mr. Holasek on the Commission.

The members of the Commission introduced themselves.

Ms. Callen commented that open space was very important to her father. She stated that she is hoping to own 55 acres of the main part of the farm property as the property has been in her family for 99 years. She stated that she would be interested in doing a historical farm based on the 1930s to the 1950s when her father and grandfather were farming. She noted that she has spoken with the Minnesota Historical Society, and she does already have the historical equipment that was originally on the farm. She stated that they have also found unique antiques from that time period when cleaning out the storage sheds. She stated that she would like to call it the Winslow Holasek Historical Farm. She stated that she would love to see the City hold different activities at the farm and provided some of her ideas. She commented that this is in the middle of Andover, and she believes that this could be an asset to the community.

Mr. Kytonen displayed an aerial image of the property for context. He asked who the land is currently owned by.

Ms. Callen replied that the land is owned by the limited partnership which is composed of herself and her sisters. She highlighted some of the work that has been done on the buildings and provided additional details on the overall property. She noted that she and her husband plan to move to the property next year to begin additional work on the property. She stated that Julie Trude and an employee of the Anoka Historical Society have visited the property.

Chair Kovich asked the size of the entire parcel.

Ms. Callen replied that the entire site is 90 acres in size. She confirmed that she would be pursuing the purchase of 55 of those acres.

Commissioner Gwinn stated that perhaps the Commission/City would be interested in purchasing the remainder of the property for open space. He noted that more information will be known once the appraisal comes in. He stated that this could be a unique opportunity to have a historical farm adjacent to a preserve. He stated that there is oak woodland on the property.

Mr. Kytonen stated that is very familiar with this property. He stated that there is some oak wilt on the property.

Chair Kovich asked if the City is looking at this land for development.

Mr. Kytonen confirmed that this property is within the MUSA. He identified an area to the north and east that Lennar is developing as the Fields of Winslow Cove.

Ms. Callen noted that this would be a unique historical farm because of the time period it would be based upon. She stated that her sister has also written a book about their childhood that also includes memories from previous generations of their family on the farm.

Chair Kovich provided background information on the process the Commission followed to purchase land from willing sellers. He stated that Winslow was very instrumental in that process and the City appreciates his contributions.

Ms. Callen commented that while she has stated that her sisters are willing to go forward with the plan, they would want fair market value of the land. She believed that this could be a great partnership. She stated that she would also envision community gardens and growing food for the food shelf.

Chair Kovich thanked Ms. Callen for sharing her vision for the property. He commented that this would be valuable developable land in the center of the community whereas a lot of the preserves are further out because they were available for a lesser cost.

UPDATE ON STATUS AND FEATURES OF THE NATURE PRESERVES

Mr. Kytonen provided a brief update on the status of the different preserves.

DISCUSS STATUS OF POTENTIAL CROSSING AT DALSKA WOODLANDS

Mr. Kytonen stated that the City applied for a grant through the DNR Outdoor Recreation Grant program and was awarded the grant. He stated that the City has not yet accepted the grant. He noted that a phase one archeological survey is recommended, and staff is researching the potential cost of such survey as that would not be covered by the grant. He stated that he will also research the use of the word recommend as perhaps that is not required.

Commissioner McGowan asked who is recommending the survey.

Mr. Kytonen replied that as part of the grant the City was required to have the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) review the proposal. He noted that SHPO reviewed the application and said there were no findings. He stated that he will be following up on that to determine if the survey is necessary. He commented that the good news is that the City received the grant for the estimated cost of \$147,500 which would include a 50 percent match by the City. He noted some work that could be completed by City staff.

Chair Kovich thanked Mr. Kytonen for his continued work on this grant and potential boardwalk noting that this is the third grant attempt. He asked if this would be part of the Kelsey Round Lake project.

Mr. Kytonen replied that the City also received a grant for that project through the same program but explained that they are separate projects.

Commissioner Gwinn also thanked Mr. Kytonen for his work.

Mr. Kytonen acknowledged the other members of City staff that assisted in the grant process as well..

Chair Kovich stated that the Commission voted to support the grant application a few meetings ago. He stated that the group should now put its stamp on the grant, as the grant has not yet been accepted by the City. He commented that the City Engineer has provided input and the Commission has not agreed with spending the same amount of money for the crossing. He stated that in visiting the site today, they were able to cross in the southern portion easily. He commented that there is a low number of users for the preserve and therefore he is cautious about spending this amount of money for a boardwalk crossing.

Commissioner McGowan asked if there would be any leeway in the boardwalk or whether it would have to be built as designed in the grant application. She recognized the high cost for the City to pay for half of the cost and asked if that scale could be reduced.

Mr. Kytonen replied that the City already committed to the matching funds prior to submitting the grant application. He noted that the City could still not accept the grant funds if that were the desire, but the City Council was aware of the matching funds amount that would be required.

Commissioner Gwinn stated that his concern would be that if the grant is not accepted, the boardwalk would never be built. He stated that he also has concern with building a boardwalk

with an approximate cost of \$150,000 in this location. He stated that perhaps the boardwalk would bring more visitors to the preserve. He asked if there has been any thought to the ongoing maintenance costs.

Mr. Kytonen stated that all those factors were taken into account, noting that this would be low maintenance.

Commissioner Ingebritson stated that he has several issues with this. He noted that this preserve is probably the lowest ranked for use. He stated that there is not a scenic aspect and there is not a looped trail. He believed that the main goal of the boardwalk was to create access to the other side and the opportunity for a looped trail. He commented that this enormous, engineered boardwalk would seem out of place in this preserve. He stated that the preserves are rustic and meant to be the experience of walking through the woods. He stated that it was his perception that the job of the Commission is to protect the preserve areas and keep them natural. He commented that as much as he would love to have a beautiful bridge to get across, there would be a lot of modifications and disruption that would come with that process. He noted that the other consideration would be practicality.

Commissioner Gwinn commented that he has considered how others view the Commission and use of funds. He acknowledged that this would be use of taxpayer money along with the grant funds. He stated that the Commission has a reputation of being conservative and responsible in its spending of funds. He was worried that this could be viewed as completing the goal but hurting the long-term mission and stewardship of funds.

Commissioner McGowan asked Mr. Kytonen for his input.

Mr. Kytonen stated that he needs to stay neutral in the discussion. He stated that he did what was directed, to submit the grant keeping in mind the goal of the Commission to have a crossing while also taking into account the safety concerns of the City Engineer. He stated that the City Council held a workshop in May where Chair Kovich expressed the views of the Commission related to the different grades of boardwalk. He noted that ultimately it will be the decision of the City Council as to whether to accept the grant, but the Commission can provide its input.

Commissioner McGowan stated that she likes the idea that this would be accessible to all but recognized that perhaps people in wheelchairs may still not choose to go down a gravel road. She commented that there is a need for accessibility, and this would provide the opportunity for access to a preserve.

Commissioner Gwinn stated that the gravel travel is part of the requirements for ADA compliance. He asked the length of life for the boardwalk.

Mr. Kytonen estimated a 30-year lifespan at minimum.

Chair Kovich stated that he is aware of the opinions of the others that are not present tonight as well. He stated that the original committee was tasked with keeping these areas natural. He stated that in walking out to the preserve today, the City has done a wonderful job taking care of

the preserves and maintaining the trails. He stated that if gravel is put over that it would change the preserve. He recognized that there are some chipped trails which work well in those locations, but gravel would change the character of the preserve. He believed that there are other things that could be done to provide access while also keeping it natural. He stated that he is not interested in spending funds on a phase one archeological study. He stated that the Commission has been clear on its desire to the Council. He believed that the Commission should turn down the grant funds. He appreciated the efforts of Mr. Kytonen as he did what was requested.

Commissioner Gwinn recognized that Mr. Kytonen was put in a place where he tried to accommodate many different viewpoints.

Motion by Commissioner Ingebritson, Second by Commissioner McGowan to decline the grant as submitted. Motion passed 4-0.

Chair Kovich commented that he will make the position of the Commission clear to the City Council. He recognized that it is difficult to turn down this grant in this amount but did not believe this was the right path for the Commission and the preserve. He stated that there are alternatives that can be pursued.

Commissioner Gwinn commented that he is still interested in the boardwalk but voted to decline because of the cost of the boardwalk as it would be similar to the cost to purchase 10 to 20 acres of property.

Mr. Kytonen stated that he will share this motion with City staff and the City Council as the Council will need to make the decision on whether to accept the grant.

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

Mr. Kytonen reported that the collaboration with Davinci Academy went well. He did not have an update on any of the other initiatives.

Commissioner McGowan commented that she will reach out to Commissioner Vedadi to possibly assist in the next initiative.

Commissioner Gwinn commented that the potential Holasek property partnership would also provide additional opportunities.

DISCUSS POTENTIAL FUNDING OPTIONS FOR ACQUIRING MORE PRESERVES

Commissioner Gwinn provided details on the information that he presented to the City which would provide an opportunity for funding and/or open space land dedication through development. He stated that he also presented an option for a referendum to provide funding.

Mr. Kytonen stated that he brought this information to the Andover Review Committee which provided comments to Commissioner Gwinn. He noted that Commissioner Gwinn used that feedback to make the changes he just presented to the Commission.

Chair Kovich noted that if the City agrees to this path, they will review the language in more detail. He stated that he does like the proposal and comparison to Blaine. He appreciated the work of Commissioner Gwinn and confirmed the consensus of the Commission to forward this information to the City Council.

Mr. Kytonen stated that this item will be brought to the City Council at its August 23rd workshop.

Commissioner Gwinn appreciated the insight of the Commission and willingness of staff to provide him input. He hoped that this could move forward and provide additional opportunities for open space and wildlife. He stated that he would also support holding a joint meeting in the future as he has other items, he would like to discuss with the City Council.

Mr. Kytonen confirmed that there could be a joint meeting in the future, but this will be the only item on the agenda from this Commission at that worksession.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Kovich mentioned previous discussion related to tree preservation as initiated by Commissioner Gwinn, and asked if that was removed from the future agenda list.

Mr. Kytonen stated that he will continue to work with Commissioner Gwinn and other applicable commissions on that concept as it falls outside of the purview of this Commission.

Commissioner Gwinn commented that he handed out a lot of maps of the preserves at the Andover Family Fun Fest and many people were not aware of the preserves.

Commissioner McGowan agreed and noted that it was nice to meet new people and introduce them to the preserves.

Chair Kovich agreed that the Fun Fest was a good event, and he always enjoys introducing residents to the preserves. He agreed that the maps went out quickly. He commented that it is also nice to talk to the members of the other commissions and City Council.

Commissioner Gwinn commented that this shows the importance of getting information out to the public about the preserves as many people continue to be unaware of them.

Chair Kovich asked that everyone review the Commission's page on the City website and bring suggestions that could make it better.

Commissioner McGowan noted that there would be more benefit to sharing photos and other information on different social media pages to engage with the community.

Commissioner Gwinn noted that there is still language on the website that refers to the Open Space Commission rather than the Nature Preserve Commission.

a. Next Meeting: October 12, 2022

Noted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – May 4, 2022

Chair Kovich stated that it was requested at the end of the meeting that a map be provided showing the passive parks.

Mr. Kytonen stated that opportunity has gone away at the moment.

Motion by Commissioner Ingebritson, Second by Commissioner Gwinn to approve the minutes of the May 4, 2022 meeting as presented. Motion passed 4-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Gwinn Second by Commissioner McGowan, to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 p.m. Motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Kameron Kytonen
Natural Resources Technician

Drafted by:
Amanda Staple, Recording Secretary