



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Council Session

Item G3

Approving Minutes of April 20, 2004 City Council Study Session

The Minutes of April 20, 2004 City Council Study Session are submitted to approval. See attached MINUTES.

Staff Contact: RaNae Edwards

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

April 20, 2004

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Study Session of the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska was conducted in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 100 East First Street, on April 20, 2004. Notice of the meeting was given in the Grand Island Independent on April 14, 2004.

Mayor Jay Vavricek called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following members were present: Councilmembers Meyer, Whitesides, Pielstick, Gilbert, Nickerson, Cornelius, Pauly, Hornady, and Walker. Councilmember Haase was absent. The following City Officials were present: City Administrator Gary Greer, City Clerk RaNae Edwards, Finance Director David Springer, City Attorney Doug Walker and Public Works Director Steve Riehle.

RESERVE TIME TO SPEAK ON AGENDA ITEMS: Two individuals reserved time to speak on agenda items.

MAYOR COMMUNICATION: Mayor Vavricek reminded the citizens of Grand Island about a moment of silence tomorrow, April 21, 2004 in honor of Pvt. Noah Boye who lost his life in Iraq and whose funeral will be tomorrow. Also mentioned was a wall of photos of military personnel who lost their lives in Iraq that would be displayed at City Hall. Mayor Vavricek mentioned that there were yellow ribbons that had been placed around Grand Island as a reminder of our military personnel serving in Iraq. Also mentioned was a Support Walk Sunday, April 25, 2004 at Pioneer Park to support our military personnel serving in Iraq.

Update on Stolley Park Improvements. Steve Paustian, Parks and Recreation Director reported since the closing of the Zoo, plans had been developed to reuse the former zoo site. A committee was formed and a reuse plan was developed. To date the construction of Kids Kingdom and the renovation of the train had been completed as part of that plan. The next phase of the implementation of the development plan was the installation of a community picnic shelter.

A plan had been developed to incorporate the community shelter with other existing features of the Park. The architects that were currently designing the arboretum had assisted staff with the design. The design called for a modification to the existing road that included rerouting. A power point presentation was provided to graphically display the proposed new routing.

Discussion was held concerning parking and access to the Stolley House. Further discussion was held with regards to the cave at Stolley Park. Several Councilmembers commented that we should try to preserve the cave and fit it in to the park experience. It was the consensus of the council that Mr. Paustian look into this issue and come back with a cost estimate. City Administrator Gary Greer stated that he felt we should return the cave to its original condition which included a water fall over the cave.

Mr. Paustian stated that he was hoping that the citizens in the community would be able to supply him with information or pictures about the cave.

Discussion Concerning Green Space. Chad Nabity, Regional Planning Director reported that as the City grows it was to the benefit of the community if land for parks could be acquired concurrent with or preceding development. The Grand Island Parks Plan contained recommendations for park sizes and general locations. Acquisition of land for parks could be very costly. Most of the land on which development was anticipated (areas where parks would be necessary) could easily be developed with residential lots covering the entire property without leaving any space for parks. The city could not afford to acquire parkland at building lot prices.

Historically the City of Grand Island had acquired parkland primarily through the donation of property that could not otherwise be developed, or by purchasing tracts of ground with tax dollars. Recently, the City had been able to purchase undeveloped tracts of ground (at predevelopment prices) in areas where parks were needed (Cedar Hills Park). The City would need additional parks as residential development occurs. The Grand Island Parks Plan suggested that every house should have a neighborhood park within ½ mile of the property.

Most property currently being developed in the City does not have an area that can be donated or purchased for parks because it cannot be developed for housing. It was unlikely that there would be property the owners would choose to give as a park rather than develop to sell for lots.

To meet the recommendation of the Grand Island Parks Plan, the City needed to create a park acquisition and development fund. This fund needs to be large enough to provide adequate money to buy land for a neighborhood park every 3 or 4 years. Generally between 80 and 120 lots were developed in Grand Island during the course of a year. A park fee of \$250 to \$500 per lot would provide between \$20,000 and \$60,000 annually toward the acquisition and development of new parks. Any fees of less than \$250 per lot would not generate enough funds to build an effective park acquisition and development fund. The fees charged to the development could be lowered if the developer was willing to provide property useable for a park, easements for hike/bike trails and/or build a trail through the subdivision with the development. The fees could be collected from the developer at the time of execution of the subdivision agreement or from the builder at the time of the building permit.

Mr. Nabity also stated that council could put money in the general fund budget to fund these parks as was currently done. Councilmember Whitesides suggested doing a combination of the two ideas, part funded by the developers and part by the city. Fees based on lot size were discussed. Discussion was held concerning when and where parks were put in. Mentioned were several parks that had been built in the last several years. The goal was to have a park within one-half mile of every home.

Greg Baxter, 1723 Bridle Lane commented on the following points:

- High property taxes – increased burden on property owners
- We are largely an agricultural community of which the developer would have to pay the taxes on the property (which are higher) before the development was completed
- Developers would have to bank roll these fees for several years before they would see a return
- Would like to see the collection of fees at the time the lot was developed
- Grandfather clause existing developments
- Would like to see taxes take care of this or see the assessment at the time of occupancy

Discussion was held concerning when to put parks in, before or during a development. Steve Paustian, Parks and Recreation Director commented that what needed to be done now was for the City to acquire farm ground at a lower cost that would guarantee a park throughout the community and would be a bargaining chip for future development of parks.

Rudy Plate, 2209 East Stolley Park Road spoke in opposition and felt the city was discriminating against the developers.

Discussion was had with regards to existing developments that do not have parks. Where does that money come from? Mr. Nabity stated that a grandfather clause could be used. Mr. Paustian stated that a date needed to be set at which time all funds from that time forward would go into a park development fund.

Mr. Paustian explained the difference between neighborhood parks, community parks, and regional parks were size and amenities.

Councilmember Pielstick recommended that this issue be brought back to council for a decision on a fee per square foot paid by developers. Councilmember Gilbert questioned if there would be a difference between residential and commercial.

Ray O'Connor, 422 South Gunbarrel Road spoke with regards to the square footage as being an unfair way of assessing these fees. Also mentioned were commercial developers that should pay these fees also. This was followed by a lengthy discussion concerning who would pay these fees.

Councilmember Whitesides stated that he felt the developers should pay these costs, not the tax payers.

Dan Starostka, Kearney, Nebraska stated that these fees should be collected at the time of the building permit based on house size. Dave Starostka, 176 Ponderosa also spoke in support of collecting the fees at time of building permit.

Mr. Greer stated that this issue would be brought back to council within the next 30 days and that we would try to compromise on this issue.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

RaNae Edwards
City Clerk