

Parcel No. 15-13-301-058, Lombardo Homes, Applicant

2016-0040

Public Hearing and Request for Adoption of the 2016-2020 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

*(Reference: Memo prepared by Alan Buckenmeyer, Acting Director of Parks & Forestry and Sara Roediger, Manager of Planning and Draft Master Plan had been placed on file and by reference became part of the record thereof.)*

*Present for the applicant were Alan Buckenmeyer, Acting Director of Parks & Forestry and Sara Roediger, Manager of Planning, City of Rochester Hills.*

*Ms. Roediger advised that a Parks and Recreation Plan (the Plan) was needed because the MDNR regulated the Plan and required one to be on file every five years to be eligible for any type of grant funding. She noted that the current Plan expired on December 31, 2015. She explained that the Plan was a guide for the City for any operated recreational facilities and programs - similar to the Master Land Use Plan - but targeted for the parks in the City. The contents of the Plan were largely outlined by State law. It consisted of a community description, administrative structure, an inventory of all of the facilities, a detailed public involvement effort, and stated goals and objectives, all of which supported an action program for the next five years. The mission statement of the Parks and Forestry Department was revisited, and stated that it would provide recreation for as many people as possible, and preserve the natural environment, which was also very prominent in the Plan. There was a natural features inventory done by Dr. Niswander of Niswander Environmental included in the Plan as well.*

*Ms. Roediger stated that the community description updated the demographic social characteristics, and the ages and household compositions of the people who lived in Rochester Hills were a component. Out of all the households in Rochester Hills, only 33% had children. She indicated that it might be surprising, because people thought of Rochester Hills as being very family-oriented, but the type of households that existed actually included quite a lot of seniors and people without school age children. She pointed out a chart which showed the breakdown of preschools, school aged, family forming, middle aged and senior aged residents. Not all of those in the family forming group were having children. The Plan listed the types of programming and types of facilities being developed and who the*

audience was for the facilities.

Ms. Roediger referred to the section on administrative structure, which was the obligatory section that outlined the organizational chart and who the providers were. The City partnered with a number of agencies, including RARA, the OPC and the Paint Creek Trailways Commission. Those agencies provided programs for the City that the City did not. She added that the budget and funding for those providers was also included.

Ms. Roediger advised that over 1,000 acres of parkland was inventoried. That consisted of seven community parks, which served the entire City; three neighborhood parks; and four special use parks, which were essentially natural features preservation, including the Museum and the Pine Trace Golf Course. There were two linear parks - the Paint Creek Trail and the Clinton River Trail were the most heavily used in the City. There were also multiple green space properties that the City was acquiring to preserve natural features. All of the above made up the over 1,000 acres of parkland for which the City was responsible.

For the public involvement process, there was a 30-day public review period. The Plan was published on the City's website, and copies were available throughout the City, including at the Library, RARA, and at the OPC. There was a public opinion survey on the website, and Administration was pleasantly surprised to see 541 survey responses in that 30-day period. With social media and an online survey, the City received much more involvement than it ever had over the past traditional planning process. Ms. Roediger and the Parks & Forestry staff worked with the Mayor's office on the social media outreach (Facebook and Twitter) and over 25,000 people were reached. There were a number of comments and much feedback.

The result of all the public involvement had been summarized into six bullet points. The Clinton River and Paint Creek Trails were the two most commonly used parks and, as such, walking and biking trails ranked as the number one facility people thought more money should be spent on in the future. In terms of new facilities, many people would like to see a splash pad or water park and a dog park. Natural features preservation and open space remained a priority for many. In terms of how the City could get more people involved in parks in the future, the comment was reiterated that more walking and biking facilities, not just paving, but restrooms, parking, etc. to enhance the walking and biking experience was needed. Better maintenance was mentioned, more diversity in programming and special events and more restrooms were the most

*cited improvements to increase people's participation in parks and programming events in the future. Over half of the respondents said they would support a millage dedicated to preserving those types of improvements. One quarter were unsure, so that meant that only one quarter said no, which was very good to support a millage moving forward.*

*Ms. Roediger related that all the analysis ended with goals and objectives. All the recommendations and goals of the Plan were to maintain and enhance all of the existing facilities while developing innovative new park facilities; to improve upon the pathways and connectivity in the City; to provide diverse programming; and to preserve significant natural features in a fiscally responsible fashion. All of the recommendations in the Plan fell into one of six main categories, which were outlined in the action program. That was a five-year plan for how to spend future money. The recommendations were ambitious, totaling over \$5.8 million, plus \$480k of annual funds, which were built into the City's budget. The \$480k included pathway installations, ADA compliance, playground upgrades and other items. She stressed that the costs were not anticipated to be funded solely by taxpayer money. It was to be funded by grants, and she reiterated that the purpose of the Plan was to be eligible for grants and private donations. The City was ambitiously looking at how it could attract outside money and perhaps use City funds as a match, in addition to money in the Capital Improvement Plan, Green Space funding and the General Fund.*

*Going through the action plan, Ms. Roediger said that it was important to note that the order was not set in stone. If funding became available for a dog park before it was planned, the City would apply for grants, even if it was not planned for four more years. She explained that it was a very fluid action plan for when money became available.*

*Ms. Roediger had outlined the priorities for funding over the next five years in the Plan, and a common thread was Riverbend Park. There was recently a presentation by Design Team Plus for Riverbend Park, and a plan for it was recently adopted by City Council. The recommendations were broken down into different elements, and the City planned to begin implementing elements as funding became available. Other key recommendations for funding included storm water improvements that were introduced as part of the Lawrence Tech Watertowns presentation earlier this year. It was also done for Yates Park and Borden Park. The City was working on Watertowns to improve access to the Clinton River through kayak launches at the Avon Nature Center and at Yates Park. Other enhancements included the Paint Creek Trail resurfacing, which*

was planned for 2018, as well as ongoing improvements to the pathways system and improvements at Borden Park to the office, maintenance yard and the roller hockey rink.

Ms. Roediger advised that after the Public Hearing, the Planning Commission could make any suggestions or modifications to the Plan, and it was staff's hope that it would be adopted at the meeting. She also advised that a Public Hearing was scheduled at City Council on February 22, 2016, when Council would see the presentation and make any desired modifications. The Plan would then be submitted to the DNR, although the City was already at work applying for various grants to implement the Plan and bring the recommendations to fruition. Ms. Roediger further advised that the effort was done fully in house by the Parks Department, the Mayor's Office and the Planning Department. She said she would be happy to answer any questions.

Vice Chairperson Brnabic opened the Public Hearing at 8:08 p.m.

**Martin Krueger, 781 Snowmass Dr., Rochester Hills, MI 48309.** Mr. Krueger thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak. He said that his interest was in Nowicki Park, which was basically unimproved green space currently. He lived in the subdivision to the east (Shadow Woods). He claimed that all of the parks in Rochester Hills were top notch, and he had had favorable experiences with the parks he used. He had no doubt that whatever the City did with its properties, whether maintaining green space or improving parks, it would be done in a very professional, positive way. Regarding Nowicki Park, from the current Plan, there were a lot of sports-type activities being planned. One that concerned him the most was a soccer field that looked as if it abutted the property lines for the people in Shadow Woods. He had expressed his concern to Mr. Buckenmeyer that some consideration should be given so that people did not park in his subdivision and cut through properties to get to activities more easily than trying to fight the fight on Adams Rd. or park in a lot. When multiple soccer games were going on at Spencer Park, for example, he observed that people parked all over the place and boxed people in. He wanted to make sure that the subdivision was not used for overflow traffic from Adams and that people were not parking on the subdivision street. He would also like some consideration for noise and disruption in the field. He thought that perhaps quieter activities like a walking park could be set closer to the property line and the more busy activities, like soccer and baseball, could be put closer to Adams Rd. He suggested that a berm or fence might be required as part of the planning. He concluded that he had a high regard for what Mr. Buckenmeyer and

his department did with the parks.

**Ioan Ghitas, 1949 Alsdorf, Rochester Hills, MI 48309.** Mr. Ghitas said that he grew up in the City, and he maintained that it had been a privilege and a pleasure living and raising his family in Rochester Hills. He noted that he was a delegate, and he walked the neighborhood to make his intention about running for different offices known. He noticed while walking was that there was a large deficiency in his area. Between South Boulevard and Auburn and Livernois and Crooks, there was a square mile that only had a middle school and a church with an open area for sports, but there were no parks in the whole mile. He said that he was surprised to learn that only 33% of the households had children. He also noticed that people used strollers to go down the street, but there was no place to walk a baby to a park. He said that his neighbors had two large dogs, and they walked them in the street, because there was no place for pets to go. Because there were no parks in the whole square mile, he and his sons had to go north to get to a park or go to a park in Troy. It had become a burden for him since he had kids because there was nothing in his area. He had a bike rack, because the only way to go biking was to leave the City and go to Troy or Birmingham. He said that another thing different with his square mile was that there were no commercial buildings - it was all residential. He said that he would like the City to consider adding something in his area.

Vice Chairperson Brnabic closed the Public Hearing at 8:18 a.m.

Mr. Anzek said that in response to Mr. Ghitas, the City was always looking for opportunities to provide more service. He did not want to get into any specifics, but one of the most popular grants the MDNR gave was for park acquisition. There were a lot of costs and other things the City had to consider. They would not only have to buy the land, but it would have to be developed, maintained and operated as well. He believed that the City was pro-active in seeking parkland where there were deficiencies.

Mr. Schroeder said that as far as Nowicki Park, he would recommend that during the planning, the City looked at berms, trees or bushes between the Park and the subdivision.

Mr. Buckenmeyer replied that Nowicki was in the Plan as a concept. The concentration for development right now was Riverbend Park. Before they did anything to Nowicki, the City would do a Master Plan and invite all the neighbors for input. Some of things in the concept could change or even disappear. Something could be added, after hearing ideas for a

*dog park or a community garden. At some point, the City hoped to develop the Park, but there would be a lot of opportunity for public input before a final plan was in place.*

*Mr. Schroeder asked if the settlement had stopped at Helen Allen Park. Mr. Buckenmeyer said that it was like a "brick" out there and it was not settling at all. Mr. Schroeder indicated that it was the landfill that was continually settling.*

*Mr. Dettloff asked if usage and permit fees would be staying the same for the next five years. Mr. Buckenmeyer said that he could not guarantee the next five years, but for the current year at least they would. He announced that the Parks Department had hired a new Director who would be starting in about a week who had not even had a chance to look at anything yet. Mr. Dettloff said that it was great that the City did the Plan in house, noting that it saved a lot of money. Mr. Buckenmeyer joked that Ms. Roediger had not submitted her bill yet.*

*Mr. Hooper said that looking at the five and ten-year plan, he did not see anything for Nowicki Park, so it did not seem as if anything would be done for the foreseeable ten years. Mr. Buckenmeyer reiterated that the City's main focus was Riverbend. They hoped to have that done in five years. If that went quicker, they would be able to move on to Nowicki. In response to the Mr. Ghitas' comment about proximity to parks, Mr. Hooper pointed out the Pine Trace Golf Course off of South Boulevard, Avondale Park on the south side of Auburn, west of Crooks, and to the northeast was Wabash Park. He said that it was true that in the immediate area there were no parks. He agreed with Mr. Anzek that there had to be a willing seller and a willing buyer in order to get to the right price to move forward. He believed that there were opportunities in that area.*

*Mr. Reece said that he came home one night recently, and he saw a beautiful fireworks display going on he hoped was in Rochester Hills, but it was in Utica. It appeared that they held a fairly large winter festival. That made him curious about how much use Thelma Spencer Park got in the winter time. He asked if people were there skating and ice fishing. Mr. Buckenmeyer said they did when there was good ice, but this year had not been conducive. Mr. Reece asked if there were any comments from residents about having more of an outdoor ice arena. He assumed they relied on the ice on Carter Lake, so if the weather was bad, it could not be used.*

*Ms. Roediger said that in the packet, there were updated pages with full*

results of the survey. She had highlighted the main comments, but in Appendix C, there were results of a couple of open-ended questions such as "What type of facilities would you like to see?" There were comments about cross country skiing and an ice skating rink was brought up by eight people (question 10). Mr. Reece asked Mr. Buckenmeyer if Utica just set up a temporary rink for its festival or if it was permanent throughout the wintertime. Mr. Buckenmeyer said that there was one area that had a Magic Square, which was a concrete square with curb that water was put in and if it froze, people skated and if not, it was a puddle. Mr. Reece said that he was talking about one right where the new baseball diamond was going up. Mr. Buckenmeyer said that it was a temporary rink. Mr. Reece commented that the City needed a winter carnival.

Hearing no further discussion, Mr. Hooper moved the following, seconded by Mr. Schroeder:

**MOTION** by Hooper, seconded by Schroeder, the Planning Commission hereby adopts the 2016-2020 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update as presented at the Planning Commission meeting on February 16, 2016 with the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the City of Rochester Hills has undertaken a planning process to determine the recreation needs and desires of its residents during a five year period covering the years 2016 through 2020, and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Rochester Hills began the process of developing the Rochester Hills Parks and Recreation Master Plan in accordance with the most recent guidelines developed by the Department of Natural Resources and made available to local communities, and

**WHEREAS**, residents of the City of Rochester Hills were provided with a well-advertised opportunity during the development of the draft plan to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the parks and recreation plan, including the opportunity to take a public opinion survey; and

**WHEREAS**, the public was given a well-advertised opportunity and reasonable accommodations to review the final draft plan for a period of 30 days, and

**WHEREAS**, a public hearing was held on February 16, 2016 by the Planning Commission at Rochester Hills City Hall to provide an opportunity for all residents of the planning area to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the Rochester Hills Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Rochester Hills has developed the plan as a guideline for improving recreation and enhancing natural resource conservation for the City of Rochester Hills.

**WHEREAS**, after the public hearing, the Planning Commission voted to adopt the Rochester Hills Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**RESOLVED** that the Rochester Hills Planning Commission hereby adopts the Rochester Hills 2016-2020 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

**A motion was made by Hooper, seconded by Schroeder, that this matter be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye** 6 - Brnabic, Dettloff, Hooper, Reece, Schroeder and Yukon

**Absent** 3 - Boswell, Kaltsounis and Morita

**2016-0059** Public Notice and request for a Tree Removal permit - for the removal and replacement of as many as 100 regulated trees for the properties at 1544 and 1600 West Hamlin, located on the north side of Hamlin between Livernois and Crooks, zoned ORT, Office Research & Technology, Parcel Nos. 15-21-376-010 and -011, City of Rochester Hills, Applicant

**2016-0057** Request for Site Plan Approval - City File No. 15-022 - Rochester College Field House, a proposed 23,432 square-foot athletic field house on Rochester College's 76-acre campus, located on the north side of Avon, between Livernois and Rochester Rds., zoned SP, Special Purpose with a PUD, Planned Unit Development Overlay, Parcel No. 15-15-451-008, Jaymes Vettraino on behalf of Rochester College, Applicant

**2016-0041** Request for Site Plan Approval - City File No. 15-018 - Goddard School, a proposed 10,992 square-foot school on .95 acre, located at the southeast corner of Auburn and Graham, west of John R, zoned B-2, General Business with an FB-2 Flexible Business Overlay, Parcel No. 15-35-226-001, Swapna Chada, Applicant

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Note:

Anyone planning to attend the meeting who has need of special assistance under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is asked to contact the Clerk's Office at 248-841-2460 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.