Memorandum 12-019 Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission Recommendation to Approve Additional Funding for Homer Playground Project

Memorandum ID: 12-019
Memorandum Status: Backup

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MEMORANDUM 12-019
_____
TO: MAYOR HORNADAY AND CITY COUNCIL
THRU: WALT WREDE, CITY MANAGER
FROM: PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
DATE: JANUARY 25, 2012
RE: RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE A REQUEST FROM THE HOMER PLAYGROUND PROJECT FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING _____
BACKGROUND
The Homer Playground Project requested an additional $50,000 to fund material and equipment purchases for a proposed new playground at Karen Hornaday Park. A special meeting was conducted on January 5, 2012 to consider that request. The Commission postponed a decision until the January 19, 2012 regular meeting. This would allow the commission time to properly review the engineering estimate by Carey Meyer, Public Works Director and a proposed spending plan by Katie Koester, Community and Economic Development Coordinator, provided as laydowns at the special meeting. A joint worksession was scheduled prior to the meeting to allow open discussion with all interested groups. The minutes reflecting that meeting is attached.

At the regular meeting on January 19, 2012 the commission considered public testimony from several persons regarding the proposed playground project. The commission disseminated information provided and with the assistance of city staff made the following recommendation. An excerpt from the minutes reflecting the dialogue is attached.

RECOMMENDATION
Approve the request for allocating an additional $50,000.00 to the Homer Playground Project (HoPP) and that future amendments to the preliminary budget established by Ordinance 11-22 for the Phase I Improvements to Karen Hornaday Park are permitted by Resolution.

PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING UNAPPROVED
JANUARY 5, 2012

Session 12-01, a Special Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission was called to order by Chair Bumppo Bremicker at 5:38 p.m. on January 5, 2012 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS BRANN, BREMICKER, LOWNEY

TELEPHONIC: COMMISSIONER ARCHIBALD

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER LILLIBRIDGE (EXCUSED)

STAFF: CITY MANAGER WALTER WREDE
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR CAREY MEYER
COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR KATIE KOESTER
DEPUTY CITY CLERK I RENEE KRAUSE

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus of the Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (Minutes are approved during Regular Meetings.)

There were no minutes for approval.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Ralph Broshes, city resident and member of Friends of Woodard Creek and Karen Hornaday Park. Mr. Broshes read his letter of April 7, 2011 for the record. He explained his reason for joining the friends was to get a trail built along Woodard Creek. He also stated that he worked with Jack Wiles on creating the master plan for the park. He strongly advocates for parking and road improvements and would like the Commission to consider the overall safety and best use of all when developing the park. He acknowledged that implementing the master plan will take a lot of money.

Jim Preston, city resident, read a letter from Jack Wiles into the record regarding use of the remaining funding. Jack Wiles in his letter strongly recommends a preferred alternative to fund for the road and parking improvements.

Roberta Highland, city resident, thanked the commissioners for their service. She stated that Karen Hornaday Park is a jewel and Woodard Creek is a gem. She advocated for parking and road improvements to be considered before anything else for safety issues. Ms. Highland recommended that a joint effort from all interested parties with the initial focus of the parking and road improvements should be considered.

Phil Needham, representing the Little League, wanted to express appreciation to commission for the seed money they received to perform improvements to the fields at Karen Hornaday Park. He stated that Little League is the biggest user group at this park and they did not want to be left out of any future plans. They have already lost some parking to the planned playground improvements without any consultation and they have concerns regarding spending all the money that is currently available on design leaving no funds to perform the actual work. He stated that the Little League would like to see more money and consideration given to maintenance and upkeep to existing facilities such as restroom roof requires replacement.

Janice Preston, city resident, read a letter that she wrote in response to how to spending the legislative grant received. She advocated and supported spending monies on road and parking improvements that will benefits the residents and visitors alike who use the park.

Jim Preston, city resident, commented that the Friends of Woodard Creek and Karen Hornaday Park were instrumental in stopping the dirt from being dumped in the area along the creek; he provided details on the effects of the creek bed and the safety benefits relocating the road and parking improvements.

Janice Preston, read a letter into the record from Marty McCleary who advocated support for use of the remaining funds to finish the engineering report to provide a shovel ready project and fully supported the parking and road improvements and beautification efforts at the entrance to the park.

Beth Cumming, city resident, and member of Friends of Woodard Creek and Karen Hornaday Park. Ms. Cumming advocated not spending any additional funds until the commission could fully review the costs estimates recently provided by Mr. Meyer and consideration given to holding additional meetings that can have interested parties from all groups attend to discuss the priorities and distribution of funds. She offered a few observations since the playground project have started and the goals set by the group and that there are several important decisions

made negating the effectiveness of the commission. She commented on the instrumental efforts of the Friends of Woodard Creek and Karen Hornaday Park that initiated all of the interest in the Park. Ms. Cumming additionally commended and recognized individuals of the community and city staff.

There were no further comments.
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VISITORS

Miranda Weiss, Homer Playground Project (HoPP), Update on Playground Project/Equipment

Deb Cox, city resident and co-chair of the group distributed an informational handout that included a summary of how the funding was obtained for Karen Hornaday Park, and the actual and estimated costs for the proposed playground improvements.
Ms. Cox stated that the group is using a format that has been proven with other parks in the state and were accomplished in the one year plan with the exception of one which had land issues. Ms. Cox noted that in the packet of information the HoPP group is requesting the commission send City Council a recommendation of support for the project and allocation of an additional $50,000 from the current funds that the City has designated for the Phase I Karen Hornaday Park Master Plan. She expounded that approving the request for $50,000 will generate the recognition and the remaining funds required to complete the project. She further noted that speaking for herself she would love to work with the other interest groups on the improvements to the park. She acknowledged the concerns expressed by the representatives of the Friends.
Ms. Cox quickly summarized the funds they have been able to raise to date, citing the methods the group has employed so far; why it would be in the best interest of the park to approve the request for $50,000 and submitting a recommendation to City Council in support of the group's efforts.
Ms. Cox responded that HoPP has not approached Rasmussen yet for a grant she believed it was planned to apply this month.

Commissioner Brann recommended a team approach from all the interested groups in applying to Rasmussen for a grant. Ms. Cox was very agreeable on that approach and felt that pooling efforts was a great idea and fully supports that idea but strongly recommends moving forward and not losing the momentum to accomplish HoPP's stated goals.

Ms. Cox was unable to answer Commissioner Archibald inquiry on what the group would do with additional funds from the City if they were unable to raise the remaining $200,000.. She reiterated the intent of HoPP and in her opinion would maybe scale back the plan but continue working on raising all the funds needed to implement the overall plan.

Commissioner Lowney expressed agreement in pooling resources, concern if the user groups cannot work together as a whole they revert back to their individual projects; she does not know how; she did not know if the playground would be the impetus to affect this; she would like to see a consensus on prioritizing the pieces of the overall project. She is not sure what would or should be the first piece.

Ms. Cox opined again that with the current energy mobilized with the playground portion and the hundreds of people coming forward to help with this project. She again acknowledged that the project may not be high on everyone's list.

Chair Bremicker stated that they have a Master Plan that has been approved by City Council and the question is how we implement it now.

Ms. Cox responded to further requests for clarification on the support being requested from the Commission to endorse the project, and setting build week for May 19, 2012.

There were no further questions or comments.

RECONSIDERATION
There were no items scheduled for reconsideration.

STAFF AND COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS

Mr. Walt Wrede, City Manager agreed with more concerted and coordinated efforts within all the interest groups. He stated that he has heard from a number of persons regarding the use of the available funds.
He introduced Katie Koester, Community and Economic Development Coordinator. As her first task she has been asked to work with the Commission and all user groups to develop an agreeable coordinated plan on how this money should be spent. Mr. Wrede further agreed that the City will not get any additional monies from the Legislature until this current funding is spent. She has come up with a draft budget to start the conversation on how to expend the available funding. He also informed the commission that the grant received was designated for Phase I of the Master Plan.
A brief discussion on the road and parking improvements not being included in Phase I of the Master Plan.

Commissioner Archibald stated that the Committee has been waiting to hear those figures from Mr. Meyer and recommended a camp host program and removal of the red shed to comply with a request from the HoPP group.

PUBLIC HEARINGS
No public hearings were scheduled.

PENDING BUSINESS
There were no items on the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS
A. Cost Estimate for Road and Parking Concepts for Karen Hornaday Park, by Public Works Director Meyer
Mr. Meyer, Public Works Director summarized the information contained in the packet and promised to not go into a long dissertation on cost estimating. Mr. Meyer provided costs estimates for Concept A to Concept B2. He noted the following:
- offered the same amount of parking spaces
- $250,000 in Access and Parking Improvements
- Earthwork between concept A & B is approximately $100,000
- The trail and pedestrian bridge are included but as a separate line item as other improvements
- The road length is approximately the same in each concept

Mr. Meyer responded to questions from the commissioners regarding the road re-alignment and what could be done with existing funds towards parking and road improvements and what could or would volunteers be allowed to provide or do. He further commented that the numbers provided do not take into account volunteer services. They are based on if these services were contracted out. He added that contractors will be less willing to volunteer services during the height of the construction season.

Commissioner Brann commented that they really need to prioritize the needs in the Master Plan and that there are other avenues for funding and all stakeholders need to be involved in searching out those funds
Commissioner Archibald thanked Mr. Meyer for providing these cost estimates.

Chair Bremicker called for a brief recess at 6:57 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 7:04 p.m.

Katie Koester, Community and Economic Development Coordinator provided a handout that provides a draft outline to initiate dialog and produce tangible results between all the user groups. Ms. Koester stated she included funding sources and amounts; work in progress, allocated or completed; suggestions for allocating the remaining funds; application for 2012 LWCF and future steps. Ms. Koester emphasized that the grant received was for Phase I Improvements and the scope of the grant agreement included playground equipment and revitalization of a playground; expanding day use area; survey, engineering, construction and drainage improvements; removal of the old storage shed; a pedestrian bridge; and resurfacing and other parking improvements. She tried to keep her recommendations in line with the grant agreement and Land and Water Conservation Foundation grant application. Ms. Koester reviewed the handout provided to the commission. She expounded on the need to spend these funds before getting additional funding from the Legislature. Discussion ensued on the work that has been completed and allocated for this park including preliminary engineering on the road realignment, pedestrian bridge and drainage improvements. Her recommendations also include elements that were included in the LWCF grant application which is what the State grant was based on. For the recommendation entitled “Northern parking improvements” clarification was provided by Mr. Meyer on the location as below the red shed in the area of the restrooms. Ms. Koester stated that the City will reapply for a LWCF grant in the spring and if that is received it could possibly construct the trail along Woodard creek and complete the pedestrian bridge.

The commissioners expressed appreciation for the recommendations as outlined by Ms. Koester and agreed with

producing something tangible, visible and draw more attention to the overall project. The political component was acknowledged also. It was opined that as long as all parties could be convinced to buy in to this plan it would be great but would also like that conversation. Discussion included extending the term of the grant; the grant agreement was dated February 2011 and must be used five years from the date on the agreement.

Commissioner Brann offered a recommendation to address safety issues regarding speeders on the road within the park.

There was no further discussion.

B. Use of a Portion of Legislative Grant Funds for Phase I Karen Hornaday Park for Playground Equipment.
Chair Bremicker read the item into the record. He noted that just focusing on one portion maybe was not the best process. He acknowledged that there was urgency on the part of the HoPP group but any recommendation would still have to be approved by City Council. He further commented that he would like to hear comments from the Friends of Karen Hornaday, Woodard Creek and Little League regarding the overall project and get additional viewpoints before making a recommendation.

Jim Preston, a soils expert by trade provided personal observation on the effects of dumping and opinions on relocating the road into the park and how it affected Woodard Creek. He offered some recommendations on what they should have as a goal to put Woodard Creek back on the right path.

Chair Bremicker called for a brief recess at 7:38 p.m. to allow members of user groups present to confer for a moment to respond to the Chair request. He called the meeting back at 7:41 p.m.

Roberta Highland speaking for the Friends of Woodard Creek and Karen Hornaday Park, related the groups experience in relation to the grant application and funding received. She stated that the main concerns of safety, establishing a trail and creek restoration were the major concerns of the group. Ms. Highland stated that the group recommends that any additional expenditures of money be postponed until further review of all the numbers and facts submitted at this meeting before anything else is done. They would further recommend re-writing the Phase I projects since it does not address any of the initial concerns that started this whole endeavor.

A brief discussion on if fill removed from one area could be used in other areas of the project. Two contractors involved stated that the quality of materials removed from that area would not be suitable for the parking and road improvements recommended. The materials could be used to fill some areas though that it was needed.

Ms. Krause stated that the discussion is off topic and that the commission was supposed to be discussing “Use of a Portion of Legislative Grant Funds for Phase I Karen Hornaday Park for Playground Equipment”

Chair Bremicker acknowledged that fact but opined that discussion was needed and that the commission was not ready to address just that issue and that they need to look at the big picture. The commissioners present agreed with the statement to postpone a decision. He also stated that the Committee should address this request, but acknowledged the circumstances not allowing that to happen at this time.

Todd Steiner, city resident and local contractor, having kept silent until now acknowledged the time and previous efforts of the other user groups but stated that the Commission should put consideration on the fact that HoPP purposes to bring $150,000.00 to the table for $50,000.00 to help improve the area.

The commissioners discussed and agreed to have a joint worksession with the user groups prior to the regular meeting to discuss Karen Hornaday Park. A discussion on how the meeting would be conducted ensued and what would be on the agenda.

Chair Bremicker requested all the groups to bring to the worksession their ideas and what they would like to see done.

There was no further discussion.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS
There were no informational materials.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE
Todd Steiner, city resident, commented that there were two items before the commission tonight and he could understand if they needed more time to make a decision on the request for more money but if they could resolve to support HoPP tonight it would assist the group in obtaining donations from other grant organizations and seeing the city supporting the organization would also help in private donations.

Deb Cox, HoPP, appreciated everyone's comments; together everyone achieves more, Go Team! Ms. Cox commented that the HoPP project is on a timeline and they have already published the build week and she expressed concern that not everyone is not in favor of building a new playground. She is genuinely interested in the whole master plan not just HoPP. HoPP has a MOU with the City; time is of the essence with their project. She wanted to plug one last time for something tangible; something to make that park stand out; remember that they have the masses that are coming together to build this playground.
Ms. Cox stated that the footprint of the playground has been enlarged to include some of the area in the lower portion nearer the existing shelter in response to Commissioner Lowney's inquiry.

Beth Cumming, city resident, commented that Parks and Rec voted to accept the Master Plan and the B2 site plan and she felt that the B2 plan needed to be altered severely. She has spent numerous hours at the park during the height of the little league season and the most cars she counted was 85, so the parking lots can be made smaller. She also mentioned that the City has some sort of ecological plan where they are trying to be more ecologically sensitive and areas should be designated for compact vehicles.

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Excerpt of the January 19, 2012 Meeting Minutes:

B. Review and Recommendation on a Request for Additional Monies Submitted by Homer Playground Project (HoPP)

Chair Bremicker introduced the item by title and opened the floor for discussion.

LILLIBRIDGE/LOWNEY – MOVED TO RECOMMEND THAT THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION APPROVE THE FULL REQUEST FOR $50,000 FROM HOPP SO THE KAREN HORNADAY PARK PLAYGROUND CAN BE BUILT THIS YEAR AS PROPOSED.

Discussion ensued on submitting recommendations piece-meal to Council and then getting it remanded back because Council did not understand; withholding a recommendation to support the HoPP request would possibly delay the start of the project this year; approving the request will not impede further recommendations to Council on how to spend the remaining funds; the implication that the Commission recommended $50,000 to be used in preliminary engineering and this money was not spent as it was accomplished in house by Mr. Meyer so those funds could be used to fund the playground request; completing this playground would encourage possible funding in the future form other sources.

After consultation and deliberation on the best possible path staff recommended submitting a recommendation to council to amend the project budget approving the request for an additional $50,000 to be allocated to HoPP for the project. An ordinance could be introduced and on the agenda for first reading at the February 13, 2012 Council meeting and then on the February 27, 2012 Council meeting the second and final reading and approval. It was noted that even if it was delayed to the first meeting in March it would be timely for HoPP to receive the funding for material purchase requirements.

Staff stated that in the memorandum to Council the Commission can include the concerns they have with future recommendations on disbursement of the remaining funds for the project.

Chair Bremicker wanted to amend the motion to include that the commission is working on amendments to allocate funding to other groups or similar wording.

Staff stated that a straight forward ordinance will be submitted if the Commission approves the request for the $50,000 and they will add to the ordinance that future amendments to the project budget will be able to be done by resolution. Staff was asked to read the amended motion with the new information.

Chair Bremicker called for a break at 7:05 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 7:10 p.m.

Ms. Krause read the new amended motion into the record.

LILLIBRIDGE/LOWNEY-MOVED THAT THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION SUPPORTS THE REQUEST FROM THE HOMER PLAYGROUND PROJECT (HoPP) FOR AN ADDITIONAL $50,000.00 AND FURTHER RECOMMENDS THAT ADDITIONAL BUDGETARY AMENDMENTS FOR PHASE I IMPROVEMENTS TO KAREN HORNADAY PARK BE ALLOWED BY RESOLUTION.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. YES. LILLIBRIDGE, BRANN, LOWNEY, ARCHIBALD, BREMICKER.

Motion carried.

Commissioner Archibald and Chair Bremicker commented on looking forward to working with the interested groups and that this will results in a forward motion on implementing the Master Plan that many individuals worked on.

Related Ordinances**Memorandum - Related Ordinances:** Ordinance 12-06 Amending Karen Hornaday Park Project Budget to Appropriate Additional Funds for Playground Equipment

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