

Florence Township Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes, June 18th, 2012

Attendance: Joe Ellingson, Ben Boege, Bill Siewert, Dale Messenberg, Brad Stone

Meeting Called to order at 7:00 pm

The purpose of the meeting was for the commission to listen to input from the residents of Florence Township regarding the new Park Plan. The commission's goal is to incorporate resident comments into the Park Plan as it is created.

There were 7 township residents in attendance. The main focus of the meeting was on Valhalla Park. The other parks were considered toward the end of the meeting.

The tone of the meeting was constructive and the desire to improve Valhalla Park was unanimous.

Many residents expressed a desire to see the river and WI bluffs from Garrard Avenue and properties along Garrard. Homeowners, guests, walkers, and folks driving through town have all expressed the desire to experience the panorama that Valhalla can provide according to those present at the meeting.

One resident recommended we consider the 1989 township ordinance regarding the parks as we draft our Plan. Other residents commented that the MN DNR had drawn up a plan back in 1990 to maintain a healthy park affording views of the river and bluffs for township residents. It appears that both the ordinances and the DNR plan were signed by the town board at that time. One resident asserted that the township ordinances should have more authority than the DNR plan. Given that both were signed by the Town Supervisors at that time the priority of these documents remains a subject for discussion. It is likely both documents require a revision given both are over 20 years old.

A comment was made regarding how our town's founders built their homes where they did and created Valhalla Park to enjoy the panorama of Lake Pepin from their residences along Garrard. Given how access from the old hotel was created by a stairwell it is likely the founders also wanted its guests to enjoy the beautiful overlook along Garrard. It was important to many residents that this legacy be respected in the new Park Plan.

One advisor commented that it is important that a few citizens not be allowed to take Valhalla hostage with unrealistic management plans for the Park. It was further stated that the new Park Plan will focus on executing roughly the same plans that have been in place for many years but have not been followed through on.

Additional topics discussed included:

- compliance with current regulatory regimes
 - including township, county, state, dept. of interior
- taking a reasonable and balanced approach that respects all neighbors of Valhalla and residents of Florence Township

- the need for good supervision of projects within the parks
- being good neighbors in the township
- the Commission's actions being limited to township parklands
- the importance of replanting after larger trees are removed
- the balance of moving forward with creating the overlook as invasives across the Park are eliminated
- avoiding the pitfall of one step in the process taking hostage all the other steps in the project
- planting evergreens along Lake Avenue to serve as sound barriers year-round
- the availability of private resources to supplement public resources
- the deteriorated condition of the latrines and pavilion in Wakandiota
- the electrical power in the Wakandiota pavilion
- the playground equipment in various parks
- the rip-rap around Frontenac Point

A number of techniques to eliminate invasives were discussed:

goats
 sprays
 sentence to serve
 volunteers
 professionals
 4H clubs

These techniques could be employed once a Park Plan is in place and it is determined whether they are appropriate given how the Plan develops.

The commissioners agreed to consider all resident comments as it creates the new Park Plan.

The meeting adjourned about 8:30 pm