



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska
Parks & Recreation Department

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ANCHORAGE



PARKS & RECREATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 8, 2018

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

Cc: Joshua Durand, Parks Superintendent

From: Maeve Nevins-Lavtar, Sr. Park Planner

Project: **PRC 18-6:** Westchester Lagoon Viewing Platform

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Westchester Lagoon is located within Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park (1824 West 15th Avenue). Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park is an 89.28 acre park classified as a Community Use area. The park has a variety of amenities including a small building used for concessions and related plaza, play equipment area, three parking lots, trails including connections to the Chester Creek Trail system and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and a disc golf course. Several areas within the park include interpretive signs. The proposed project is proximate to a set of signs focusing on birds, bird habitat and the lagoon.

The proposed project includes a viewing platform that is located on the north shore of the lagoon towards the western part of the park, specifically south of the parking lot that serves the concrete boat ramp. The project location is based on existing views of the shore nesting bird activity at the island just a hundred feet from shore opposite the concrete boat ramp. The viewing platform would be accessed by a short paved trail that would connect to the existing trail. The platform proposes to include a unique bench system will accommodate ice skaters in the winter and be hidden from view in the summer.

FUNDING

MOA Parks was contacted in 2016 by John Wenger, an educator and avid birds-person who has worked in Alaska for decades. Mr. Wenger approached the MOA with the idea of a viewing platform that would encourage knowledge and education of shorebirds and that would allow views of the eagle nest on the south shore of the lagoon. He was directed to the Anchorage Park Foundation who is managing his donation and assisting in project development. Mr. Wenger is donating \$50,000 for the planning, design and construction of the viewing platform.

PLANNING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Information was presented to the South Addition Community Council at their December 2017 meeting. A motion was made and the project was unanimously supported by those in attendance (see attached minutes). The design team contacted the National Audubon Society who referred to the local Audubon Chapter who noted general support for the project and willingness to review plans as appropriate. Thede Tobish, avid birder and MOA Senior Planner assisted in the location of the platform and will assist as required.

Steven Ellis, MOA Flood Hazard Administrator, was contacted. According to Mr. Ellis the project will be required to fill out a Flood Hazard Permit, however a detailed analysis will not be required. Mr. Ellis notes the structural engineer will have to provide data on lateral load and uplift to assure the structure is solid in a flood event; however since the proposed structure is not a controlling factor in terms of flooding and the project is not in an area of flowing water, there will not be a requirement for a No-Rise Certification.

2018 IMPROVEMENTS

The project will be constructed by a contractor and will include the following elements:

- 8' x 24' Viewing platform with open grate surface, supported with pilings that will be located above OHW;
- Open railing system suitable for photographers and binoculars;
- 6' wide access path connecting to the existing 10' wide asphalt path. Proposed path to be asphalt and decking material as it approaches the viewing platform;
- Interpretive signs or a system to mount interpretive materials;
- Winter skate bench located on the face of the viewing platform, mounted so as to be removable and mounted beneath the deck to piles during ice free months.
- Revegetation plantings as required (may include volunteer transplanting of tall grasses); and
- Lawn areas to match existing adjacent lawn.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The proposed improvements at Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park are supported by the South Addition Community Council. The Department recommends that the Parks & Recreation Commission pass the proposed resolution to support the new viewing platform as presented.

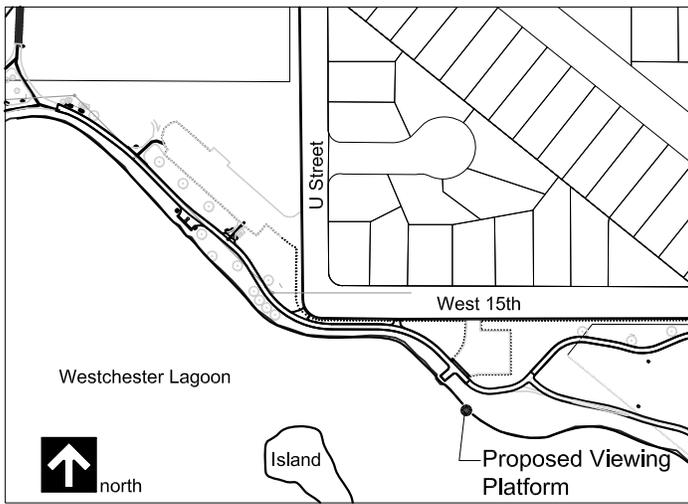
ATTACHMENTS INCLUDE:

Site Plan Proposed Viewing Platform Park Improvement
Meeting minutes by South Addition Community Council

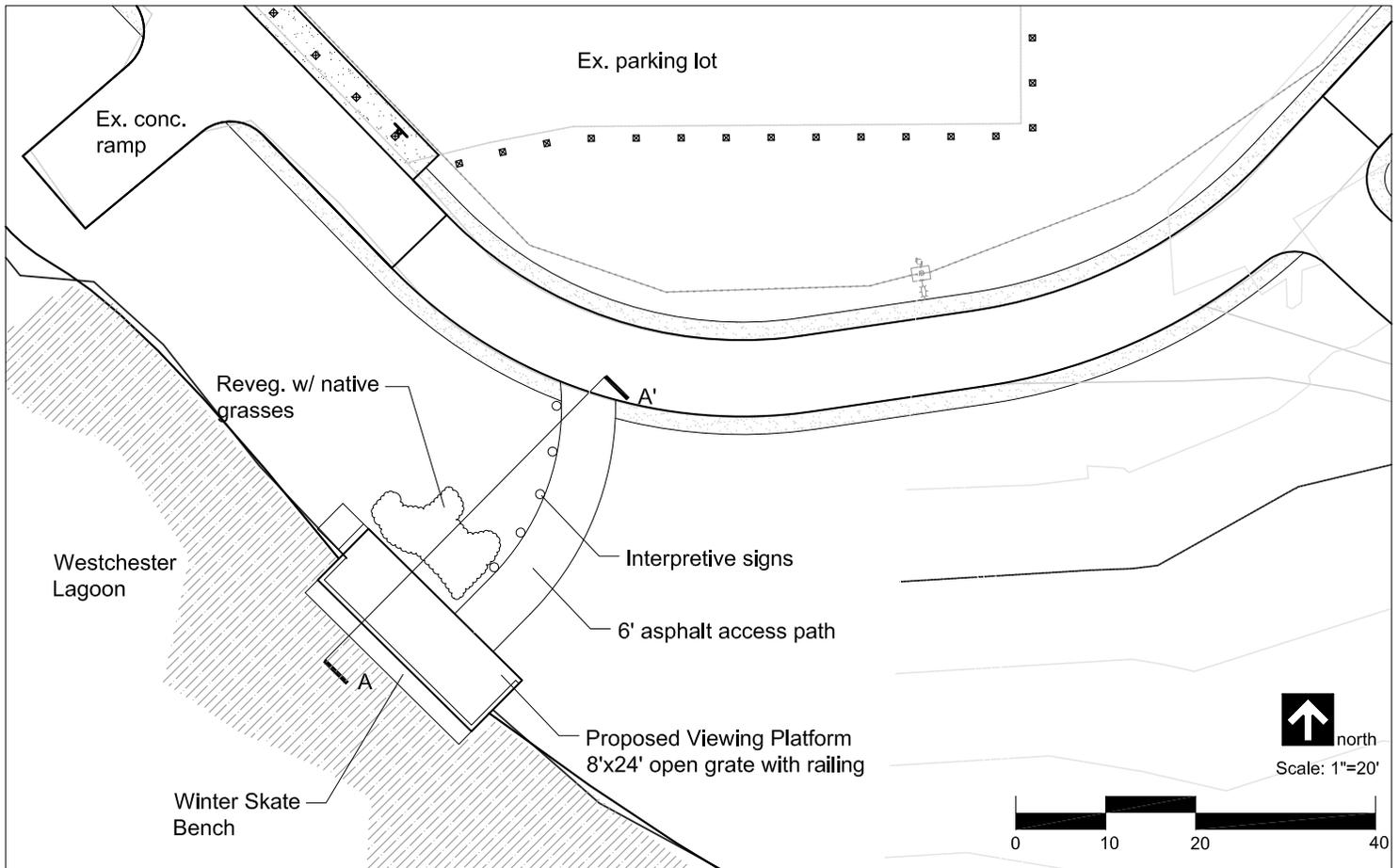
Proposed Viewing Platform

Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park/Westchester Lagoon

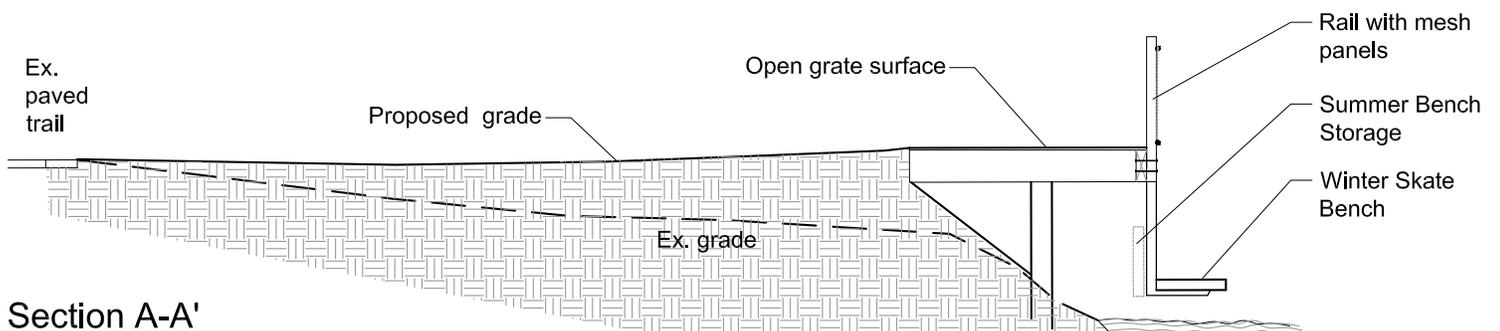
November 2017



Project Location



Overall Site Plan



Section A-A'

South Addition Community Council Meeting Minutes December 21, 2017

Board Members Present:

Moira Gallagher, Jeff Manfull, Jed Drolet, Hans Thompson, Cathleen Hahn, Ruth Ann Jennings

Changes to the Agenda:

Tom Begich to speak first to attend an event in Fairview on Homelessness

Gretchen Cuddy added to the agenda.

Senator's Report:

Fairview event on homelessness: 'bringing the players together' on 12/23. We have enough housing and vouchers for all the homeless. There is some disagreement with this statement from a member of the community that there is only enough housing for transitional living which is different.

President's Report:

The Neighborhood Plan presentation this month is cancelled because concern for low turnout this month. It will resume January.

Vice President's Report: Happy Solstice.

Treasury Report:

\$3549.33 in the bank account. Raised \$40 last month in annual voluntary due of \$5.00

Assembly Report:

Proposed MLP sale. With a sale, rates for ML&P customers will stay lower because of ownership of BRU field.

Hans asked about the muni making a higher counter offer and where would the money go. Chris responded that these details have not yet been worked out and will be soon.

Elise asked about undergrounding in the neighborhood and will this change participation. Christ responded that both telecoms are paying their full amount into undergrounding but they are choosing more projects with Chugach to get more line undergrounded.

The Assembly is focus on bonds for the next month. One proposed bond is a trails bond for Chester creek for trails into the wooded area of the park.

Someone asked about increased funding for homeless camp cleanup. Chris responded that there will be \$500K additional funds for a 7 day a week crew, from a 4 day a week crew. There will also be an additional \$170K on top of that money. Chris also mentioned that the ACLU does not plan to challenge the new camp removal policy from 14 days to 10 days.

There is currently a full complement of police after the most recent academy graduation.

Representative's Report:

New session on 1/16. Budget proposal from the governor was announced. Essentially flat funding. Must use Permanent Fund to pay for the deficient. Proposed employee income tax of 1.57% to pay for deferred maintenance costs.

There are plans to introduce a bill that would mandate warnings that doctors must give when prescribing opioids.

Police Report: Absent

Fire Dept. Report: Absent

FCC Report: No Report

Old Business:

Valley of the Moon Wooded Trail:

Hans presented a new letter of support after consideration from last month and presented the idea for the trail. David Gottstein asked about the presence of private property in that park and Hans responded the trail will bypass the private property.

The letter of support was approved unanimously 9 to 0 with no absentions.

New Business:

Update on 9th ave. property development on west end:

New calculations for building height on slopes will result in the property not requiring a variance from R3. They do not plan in coming back to the community council unless there is new plan for a variance. Design is not yet at 35%. The current plan is for just condos.

Westchester Lagoon Nature Path:

Updates are being built to the nature path along the south side of chester creek between Spenard and Arctic. The trail will be paved/repaved, the parking lot will be repaved, new cantilevered decks overlooking the river, and lighting with smart sensors like ML&P is using. Plans to come back in a year to talk to community council.

Westchester Lagoon Bird Viewing Deck:

A new deck overlooking Westchester lagoon slightly to the south of the parking lot next to the boat ramp is planned. A private donation of \$35000 has been made by John Winger. The designed size will be 12'x24' and the deck will cantilever over the water. They would like to see construction this spring. They are looking for a vote of approval from the community council. The vote of support passes 11 to 0 with no abstentions.

Roger's Park CC Public Safety Group:

Gretchen Cuddy is extending an invitation to three events on the Chester Creek trail to get people outside and on the trails. Their group has been going since August. The first event is the only currently scheduled event which will be on 1/7/18 at 2-4pm at the Eastchester fields. There will be coffee and cocoa (Steamdot provided) and cookies (bring your own mug). The second event is planned to add chalk art to the trail from East chester to West chester lagoon. The third event will be a projected movie with some hot drinks TBD. They have gone through the permitting and there will be port-o-potties.

Community Comments: None



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Resolution No. 2018-02

Approval of Proposed Improvements to Westchester Lagoon Viewing Platform

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, through the Anchorage Park Foundation, Mr. John Wenger, a retired educator and avid birdwatcher, along with support of the Audubon Society proposes improvements to a feature of the Westchester Lagoon at the Chester Creek Trail; and

WHEREAS, the project is located within the Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park on the north shore of the Westchester Lagoon, specifically south of the parking lot off of 15th Street that serves the boat ramp and ice skating area; and

WHEREAS, the proposed bird viewing platform would encourage knowledge and education of birds and allow for unobstructed views of the eagle nest on the south shore of the lagoon, in addition, the project would provide a safe area with a suitable platform for sightseeing and birdwatching by visitors and residents as this site is the first opportunity along the greenbelt trail corridor for viewing birds; and

WHEREAS, the platform would also include a unique bench system that would accommodate ice skates in the winter and be hidden from view in the summer; and

WHEREAS, the project would help address current safety issues between the Chester Creek Trail and Tony Knowles Coastal Trail intersection with the through-traffic user conflicts and wayside users; and

WHEREAS, on December 21, 2017, the South Addition Community Council considered the project and gave its unanimous support; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED: The Parks and Recreation Commission approves the improvements, generally as proposed, to the Westchester Lagoon Viewing Platform, subject to obtaining required permits.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 8th day of March 2018.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

John H. Rodda, Director
Parks & Recreation Department