

MEMORIAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Village of Elk Rapids, Michigan

2015

Developed by the Parks and Recreation Commission

Planning Commission Approved, _____

Village Council Approved, _____

Introduction

The purpose of the Memorial Park Management Plan is to incorporate the public interest in Memorial Park that will identify short and long term preservation items and improvements. The plan will rely on activity areas and map(s) to communicate Plan concepts. It should be noted that activity areas may overlap and therefore activities of one type may spill into another activity area. However, physical improvements within an activity area should tend to improve the type of activity identified for that area. It is the intent of this plan to incorporate and allow only recreation activities and facilities that are practical. However, due to the limited space and sensitive environmental characteristics, many recreation activities may not be practical or acceptable.

Historical Background

In the early 1900s citizens first entertained the notion of developing a park in the area of the present park and the island where the library is now located. Village Trustees approved purchasing Lot #11 of Section 21, Township 29 North, Range 9 West, but enthusiasm for further development waned. Then on June 27, 1912 the Village considered a deal with Dexter & Noble Land Company for the property known as Memorial Park. For \$500 per year, paid years 1912 through 1917, the Village could use the park land. A maintenance man would be hired for 5 months a year and gradual improvements could be made. Special considerations were that there would be no dumping or building on the site and the Dexter & Noble Land Company would not be responsible for taxes or any other fees that may be imposed. Village Council members could not decide on the offer, so on March 13, 1913 a public referendum was held and the public voted down the offer by a no vote of 181 and a yes vote of 70.

Time passed and in March of 1922 the offer was accepted by the Village Council. Then in 1927, a resolution was passed purchasing additional property lying north of River Street, fronting on Elk River, lying between Pine and Spruce Streets. This resolution passed by a margin of 4 to 1.

One of the first improvements was prior to 1931 when tennis courts were constructed and then in 1931 shuffleboard courts were built. In 1936 the beach was closed due to poor sanitary conditions and appears to remain closed until 1954 when it was reopened for public use. The park land continued to be used and in August of 1940 a crowd of over 1,000 people participated in the Antrim County Centennial. With crowds continuing to increase, park

benches, picnic tables, barbecue grills and trash containers were provided for seasonal activities. Then in the 1940s through the 1970s more facilities were made permanent. On June 14, 1951 Veterans Memorial was under construction. The original bathhouse was built in the mid 1950s and was later torn down in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1987 the shuffleboard court was replaced by basketball courts. The Corps of Engineers did some filling and leveling of the park grounds in 1971 – 1973. They also removed the Johnny Rock from the beach to its present location.

The installation of the school bell and a concrete picnic table were established as memorials in 1961 and 1962. In the early 1980s the park walkway was constructed. In 1989 the children's Mackinac Bridge playground was added. With the assistance of the Elk Rapids Rotary Club and the Elk Rapids Lion's Club, the automatic watering system was added in 1996 and a water fountain was donated and installed in 1997, located near the kid's playground and has since been removed. In 1998 an Eagle Scout project reconstructed the library bridge on the east end of the park.

Today the park continues to be maintained by the Elk Rapids Department of Public Works. Since 1996 there have been many improvements:

- 1996 – Tennis Court Construction (two rear courts)
- 1998 - Basketball Courts Renovated
- 2000 – Playground Frog and Truck Added
- 2002 – Noble St. Fence Added
- 2004 – Rotary Park Renovation
- 2005 – Blue and White Playground Equipment Added, Cedar St. Bathroom Renovated
- 2006 – Light Globes in Park and Downtown Added, Historical Marker Added on Ames St.
- 2007 - Tennis Courts Painted and Repaired
- 2008 – Park Restroom Added
- 2009 – Cedar St. Bathroom Roof Repaired
- 2011 – Beach Volleyball Net Added
- 2012 - One Rear Tennis Court was Redesigned into a Basketball Court and Children's Sport Court
- 2013 – Basketball Lights Added
- 2014 – Pickleball Striping to the Rear Tennis Court

Definitions

Passive Area(s): The term passive in recreation use is a relative term. Passive recreation emphasizes the open space aspect of a park and requires a low level of management and development. Passive activities in Memorial Park would include, but not be limited to: picnicking, sunbathing, walking, scenic viewing and reading.

Active Area(s): The term active means intensive development and a high level of management and development. Active area activities In Memorial Park would include, but not be limited to: basketball, tennis, volleyball, pickleball, Frisbee and playground activities.

Passive Areas: Two passive areas are identified.

West: The West area is located to the west of the Active area and north of River St. to the water's edge. The West area includes grass areas, beaches, benches, picnic tables, grills, paved walkways, shade trees and natural area that blends in on the northwest corner.

East: The East area is bounded by River St. to the south, Elk River outlet to the east, the beach to the north and an Active area to the west. The East area includes the Veteran's Memorial, a large grass area, shade trees and a paved walkway.

These areas should remain passive in use. Continue to use the West area for picnics and keep a moderate amount of shade trees. Portable traditional style picnic tables were installed in 2015.

Active Area: There is one active area identified.

This area includes two basketball courts, three tennis courts (one court is striped for pickleball), a parking lot, a playground, a paved walkway, bicycle racks, a restroom, a well house, a water treatment building, limited shade trees and a swimming beach. This area should remain active in use.

Swimming: The swimming area is located on the shoreline of Memorial Park.

Natural Area: The only Natural Area in Memorial Park is located between the paved walkway and the beach at the west end of the park. This Natural Area provides a buffer from wind and

sand erosion, so little sand removal is required in this area in the spring. This area also provides some seclusion for park users who like to get away from the more crowded east end of the beach. The Natural Area ends approximately 190' east of the green fire hydrant that is adjacent to the well head near River and Ash Streets. Village employees should continue to monitor this area as it is prone to poison ivy infestations. The Natural Area now includes four benches and it is recommended that this number not be increased. The general concensus from the public is this area should be allowed to remain natural.

Other Park Related Items

Erosion: Fluctuations in the level of Lake Michigan can greatly effect the shoreline of Memorial Park. Due to these fluctuations and storm activities the beach can change dramatically in very short periods of time. Adding to the beach configuration changes, is the effect of the breakwaters located to the east of the park. The general practice of the Harbor Commission to annually relocate dredged material from the harbor mouth to the beach, should continue. Additional erosion occurs due to blowing sand. Most of this erosion occurs during spring, fall and winter storms. The Elk Rapids Department of Public Works annually relocates as much of the sand as possible in the spring to its original beach location, and this practice should also be continued. To the far west of the park, where River St. curves, the Village has placed a large angular stone on the shore line. This protection was necessary to prevent the loss of River St. This stone revetment should be monitored at regular intervals to assure there is minimal beach erosion. Erosion along the beach in the Natural Area is a concern and should be monitored. Sand movement in the Court area is monitored annually.

Vehicle Use and Parking: Formal parking is located on a small parking lot between the basketball and tennis courts. Paved off road parking spaces are provided on the north side of River St. Informal parking exists on River St. east of the parking lot drive entrance and on the south side of River St. For most occasions parking is adequate. During special events, parking can become a premium as cars will park along side streets perpendicular to River St. At this time, there is no intention to add parking spaces.

Vegetation and Garden Planning: Memorial Park does not have any formal gardening spots and there does not appear to be a need to develop any. Vegetation should remain in its present condition. Spirea along the riverbank provides limited access to the river and provides river bank stability. Spirea or similar vegetation should remian. Trees in the park are to be considered as part of the Village annual pruning. The Village relies on the Beautification Commission recommendations for vegetative planning, maintenance and planting of all trees

and shrubs. The entrance garden to the library bridge is maintained by the Elk Rapids Garden Club.

Lighting: Lighting found in the park is along the paved walkway. Street style lampposts were installed in 1987 and updated with LED lighting and new globes in 2006. Basketball court lights were installed in 2013.

Zoning: Memorial Park is presently zoned “Public” and this plan strongly recommends it remain the same.

Signage: Signs are limited in the park to “rules”, “directional” and “educational” signs only. Signs should remain limited and small in size. The style and location of signs is the responsibility of Parks and Recreation Commission and the Village Council.

Conclusion

When working to create this plan, the Parks and Recreation Commission relied on comments at public meetings, comments from other Village commissions, Village Council and goals of the Village Master Plan. Master Plan “Goals” specific to this plan is attached. In general the public desires this park to remain physically similar to what it is today. While physical changes will be contemplated, they should be thoroughly reviewed before implementation so that the park maintains its present design.

This Management Plan should be reviewed and updated every five years by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

The following goals are presented here verbatim from the Village Collaborative Master Plan:

Natural Resources and Beautification

Goal 1. Natural resources will be protected and preserved.

Objectives

1. Encourage a land use pattern that is oriented to and respects the natural features and water resources of the area.
2. Evaluate the environmental impact of all new development.
3. Protect land resources and water quality related to our lakes, streams and wetlands.
4. Encourage the continued natural use of wetlands as groundwater recharge and storm water holding areas.
5. Identify and protect desirable open space and scenic vistas.
6. Establish regulations and standards necessary to protect shoreline and beach areas.
7. Establish regulations and standards necessary to protect and preserve the quality of the air from degradation due to fumes, odors, smoke, dust and other pollutants.
8. Establish regulations and standards to protect the community against high noise levels and exterior lighting glare.
9. Utilize Best Management Practices (BMP) to regulate and minimize direct storm water discharge into lakes and rivers.

Goal 2. Environmentally sensitive areas, open space and public garden will be maintained for the enjoyment of residents, visitors and future generations.

Objectives

1. Preserve and maintain our public gardens and natural areas.
2. Preserve environmentally sensitive lands for open space and passive recreational purposes.
3. Protect our most prized features, such as the public library grounds, public parks, beaches, gardens, natural areas, tree lined streets and open spaces.
4. Preserve and protect all healthy trees growing on public property and replace or add to the stock when needed.
5. Encourage creative design and planning techniques for all new development so as to produce visual harmony, preserve special features and protect vital natural resources.
6. Evaluate, periodically, the need for public acquisition of environmentally sensitive and available properties located within the Village.
7. Preserve and maintain existing active recreation areas.

Recreation, Parks and the Harbors

Goal 8. Maintain the high quality of both harbors for public use in perpetuity.

Objectives

1. Provide for public boat access, dockage, moorage and parking.
2. Recognize the lower harbor is to be available for refuge.
3. Continue to recognize that the harbor is under the jurisdiction of both State of Michigan and Village of Elk Rapids rules and regulations.
4. Harbor development projects should consider the overall needs of the harbor vicinity, protection of the surrounding natural features and its impact on the Village.

Goal 9. Recreational facilities will be enhanced and the amenity level will be expanded to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

Objectives

1. Continue efforts to provide seasonal outdoor recreational opportunities.
2. Maintain existing public access to lakes and waterways within the Village limits.
3. Support cooperative recreational planning and development with the surrounding townships and the schools.
4. Encourage the consideration of recreational facilities as an integral part of community development plans.
5. Include a community center, serving community needs for indoor recreation in the community development plans, possibly developed cooperatively with surrounding Townships and school (See #3 above).
6. Preserve and maintain existing recreation areas.
7. Construct modern restrooms within park facilities.
8. Add a dog park to the community.