Stillwater Township News

October 2007

Comprehensive Plan tackles the future of township parks

Work continues on the effort to revise the Township's Comprehensive Plan, with the most recent work involving an effort to identify and protect future park and natural space areas.

Planners and township officials have been pinpointing high-quality natural resources within the township and identifying ways to connect them with "greenways," says planner Sherri Buss.

For instance, the Fairy Falls area has been identified as a high-quality natural resource area, as well as the area around Silver Lake. Other areas would include natural bluffs along the river. Connecting the natural resources in the township with green space helps to keep them healthier and creates opportunities for biking and hiking trails.

Once the greenway corridors are identified, the township can take steps to try to preserve them when development happens, Buss says.

Typically, a developer must either create a park or natural space within a development or contribute to the township's park fund as a condition of building a housing development. If a parcel within a proposed development has already been designated by the Comprehensive Plan as part of the greenway corridor, the developer could be asked to create a park or green space there. Thus, the plan guides where future parks will go.

The parks committee worked hard to identify five parks that could be developed or expanded over the next 20 years. Facilities that could be added include a baseball field, soccer field, basketball court, and two tennis courts.

The new Comprehensive Plan will also identify strategies the township could use to protect designated future park areas that are currently private property. In the future, developers submitting proposals would have to map the township's designated green spaces on their plans and would need to have a plan for protecting that space.

In some cases, the township may encourage landowners to use Washington County's Land and Water Legacy Program, which provides funds to purchase land to preserve water quality, woodlands and other natural areas.

The Planning Commission, Parks Committee and Board have completed work on the Comprehensive Plan. The only thing that remains to be revised is the transportation section, but no significant changes are expected.

The draft must be submitted to the Metropolitan Council by March of 2008, but Buss believes the township will finish the draft by December.

Residents are encouraged to comment on the plan by visiting the website at www.stillwatertownship.com.

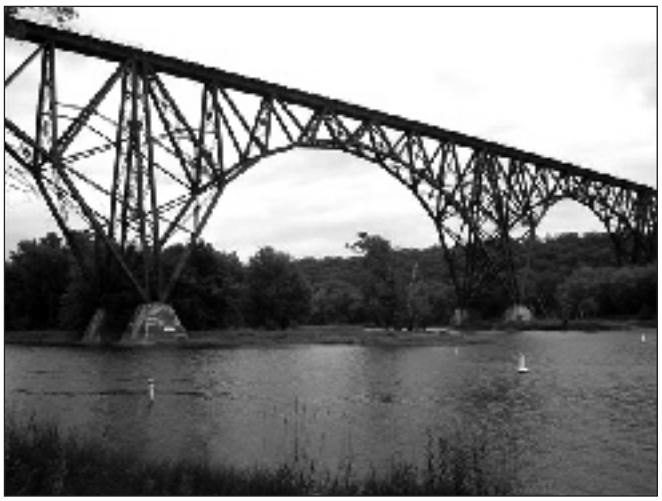
National Historic Site

The High Bridge over the St. Croix River is one of seven National Historic Sites located in Stillwater Township. The railroad bridge, used by the Soo Line, is a 2,682-foot arched bridge that spans the St. Croix about five miles north of Stillwater.

According to notes kept by photographer John Runk on file at the Washington County Historical Society Museum, the bridge was designed by C.A.P. Turner and opened in June 1911 after one year of construction and at a cost of $500,000.

Two crews built the bridge out from both sides of the river, each doing the same amount of work in the same period of time. When the two sides reached the center, they found that the two spans matched perfectly.

To see the bridge, drive Arcola Trail until you reach the railroad tracks and overpass near 120th St. You will see a small, brown sign marking the single parking spot for the National Park walking trail down to the river to view the bridge (it takes about 15 minutes).



In the know

Infected elm trees being removed

Beginning in November, the township will begin to remove nearly 160 trees that have been infected with Dutch elm disease. The trees are all located in the right-of-way along township roads and pose a public danger if they should topple into the road. The trees have already been marked for removal. The township has contracted with BJ Haines Tree Service to do the removal, which will take place over several months.

Dutch elm disease is a fungal disease affecting all types of elm trees that is spread by the elm bark beetle. Removal helps control the spread of the disease.

Bear sightings!

There have been frequent sightings recently of a mother bear and two cubs.They were last seen near the town hall in mid-September. The bears are getting into beehives and other places where there is food.

Please use caution around these wild animals and try not to get between a mother bear and her cub. It's best not to leave food outside, including bird seed and suet.

Hunting rules

Hunting is not allowed in Stillwater Township except on parcels of land larger than five acres. The hunter must carry written and dated permission if he is not the landowner.

Duck hunting is allowed on lakes and ponds, but the hunters have to be 500 feet from the nearest residence and 150 feet from a non-occupied building.

The polls are open on Nov. 6

The Town Hall will be open on Nov. 6 for a referendum and election of school board members for Stillwater Area Public Schools. Residents will be voting on three questions to provide funding for local schools. In addition, they will be choosing four school board members from a field of seven candidates.

For more information, go to the District's website at http://www.stillwater.k12.mn.us/levy.

Township hires new treasurer

Carol Collins started to work for the township in mid-August as the new treasurer, replacing Gloria Sell. Collins, a five-year resident of Grant Township, has experience as an accountant with the cities of Morehead and White Bear Lake. Collins says the parttime position of treasurer will probably require about 20 hours a week.

Winter boat storage rules

When storing your boats for the winter, remember that boats over 25 feet long cannot be stored outside in the township. Boats shorter than 25 feet can be stored on your property, preferably out of sight.

Stray dogs

Remember to keep your dogs under control at all times, and don't allow them to run loose. Stray township dogs are taken to Hillcrest Animal Hospital (484-7211). If a dog is impounded, the impoundment fee of $60 will be added to daily boarding fees. If a stray dog is found, call Steve Nelson (439-0796).

The township does not pick up stray cats.

Stay safe on the phone, Internet

Township police chief Steve Nelson passes along these safety tips to residents. First, make sure you are using an encrypted site before doing any financial transactions online (look in the search window for an "s" after the "http.")

Also, do not give out your credit card number over the phone to anyone. It's a good policy never to buy or donate over the phone unless you initiate the call.

Finally, to thwart identity thieves, never leave outgoing mail in your mailbox, and pick up your delivered mail promptly.

Can the bottled water

How often do you grab a purchased bottle of water before you leave the house? If you used a reusable bottle, you would save money and natural resources. According to the Earth Policy Institute, Washington D.C., it takes more than 1.5 million barrels of oil each year to produce water bottles for Americans. That's enough to fuel 100,000 cars for a year.

You can recycle water bottles, but research shows that only 23 percent of the 27.9 billion water bottles sold each year are recycled.

New to the township? Contact Recycling Coordinator Karen Richtman (351-9162) to set up waste and recyclables collection.

Date: July 27, 2007

To: Stillwater Township Citizens

From: LuAnne Major

Tim Dwyer

Subject: Wetland Variance Request and Building Permit

We replaced an existing building with another slightly larger building on our property without obtaining the proper variances and permits, in essence without going through the proper channels. This put the Town Board members—officials elected by you, the citizens—in an uncomfortable place, whereby they were forced to make their decisions on the variance after the structure was in place.

We truly regret the anguish this caused and the inconvenience and time spent on the variance request, and thank the Board for their patience in working with us to correct this matter. We are prepared to pay the financial penalties associated with this incident.

Development now being built along Highway 96

The earth-moving equipment working the land just off Highway 96 is clearing a 170-acre site for a housing development called Millbrook. The land, previously owned by longtime resident Arthur Palmer, will be home to townhouses and single-family homes, as well as a new park.

The project is located south of Highway 96 and west of Neal Avenue. Bill Turnblad, a planner with the city of Stillwater, says the development will ultimately hold about 100 townhouses and 170 single-family homes.

The project will be built in three phases. The first phase prepares the land and includes the construction of 50 townhouses and 60 single-family homes.

The first phase will be built over the next couple of years with the entire project completed in about six years.

The main access to the development will be from a road that links to Highway 96. Eventually, Turnblad says, there will be another access road to Neal Avenue, but that road will not be developed until the final phase of the project is completed. This was done to accede to neighbors' requests that construction equipment not be allowed to travel along Neal Avenue.

The development also will include a seven-acre park that will lie along the length of Highway 96. The park would eventually contain athletic fields, play equipment, restrooms, picnicking facilities, parking and other park amenities. There is currently no timetable for finishing the park, Turnblad says, although the land is now being graded and turf will be established by the builder.

You must get a permit....

Stillwater Township residents are required to apply for permits for home building or improvements on their property. Permits are required for the following things:

- new homes
- home additions
- garages
- pole barns
- fences six feet or taller
- roofing projects
- siding for a home
- window replacement
- swimming pools exceeding five thousand gallons
- plumbing work that involves water supply or waste lines
- heating and air conditioning work

Permits for all those items can be obtained through Jack Kramer, the township's building inspector, at (651) 351-5051. Fees for the permits are generally based on the value of the project, except for plumbing and heating projects, which carry a flat fee.

In addition, electrical permits are required and issued through the state. They can be obtained online at www.electricity.state.mn.us, or by calling (651) 284-5064.

Land near Twin Lake being given to local Watershed District

A small parcel of land in Stillwater Township next to South Twin Lake off of Highway 96 is being given to the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District and will become public land when the deal goes through. The land could become part of a corridor of parks and green space within the township.

John Bower, of the Watershed District, says the parcel is a small strip of land just east of South Twin, which lies south of Highway 96 and west of Neal Avenue. The property owner had approached the Watershed District with the intent to give the land to the District in advance of his intention to subdivide his property into three sections and sell them.

But because the land in question is currently subject to some trespassing as people try to reach Twin Lake, the property owner wanted to resolve that issue before he sells, Bower says.

The land that will be given to the Watershed District totals about 10 acres and could be linked to the park and green space that will be developed as part of the Millbrook development. Bower says that bike paths may be developed along South Twin, although a vegetative buffer strip would probably separate the path from the lake.

Bower says the lake is on the state's list of impaired waters, so the Watershed District welcomes the opportunity to protect the eastern border of the lake and try to restore the health of the lake. This is especially important, he says, because it seems clear that Neal Avenue, part of which is currently a gravel road, will probably be paved in the future.

Stillwater Township
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Meetings

Township meetings are free and open to the public. Check the bulletin board at the town hall or the website for current agenda and meeting information.

Township Board of Supervisors meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month at 7 p.m., except for November and December, when it meets only on the second Thursday.

Planning Commission meets as necessary on the first Thursday of each month at 7 p.m.

Parks Committee meets as necessary on the second Monday of the month at 7 p.m.

If you need.....

Burning permits
Steve Nelson
(651) 439-0796

Building inspections
Jack Kramer
(651) 351-5051

Park reservations
Crystal Johnson
(612) 282-5493

Recycling information
Karen Richtman
(651) 351-9162

Animal Control
Steve Nelson
(651) 439-0796

Contact us

Township Board of Supervisors
Linda Countryman (651) 351-0714
Jim Doriott (651) 439-8499
Jim Hiniker (651) 351-1867
David Johnson (651) 439-5448
Sheila-Marie Untiedt (651) 439-6476

Township Clerk
Pat Bantli (651) 439-9051

Clerk for Parks and Planning Commmission
Kathy Schmoeckel (651) 439-6451

Township Treasurer
Carol Collins (651) 206-4193

Police Chief
Steve Nelson (651) 439-0796

Website Publisher
Bob Ranalla (612) 819-8497

Newsletter Editor
Beverly Petrie (651) 430-9294

Find this information plus email addresses at www.stillwatertownship.com