

ROCHESTER ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

2-5-24

Roll Call

A quorum was present as made up by the following current REC members in attendance:

- Rosemary Jonientz, Chair
- Carlos Perez
- Bob Schellinger
- Elizabeth Primus

Chair Jonientz led the meeting.

Housekeeping

There were no housekeeping matters.

Agenda Approval

The agenda was accepted without a vote.

Review/Acceptance of Last Minutes

The prior meeting was the second of two public hearings held by the REC on January 17, 2024. No SEQR referrals were heard by the REC during the January 17, 2024 ZAP public hearing.

Review of Correspondence

There was no correspondence for review or to be issued.

Reports

There were no reports for review or to be issued.

Old Business

There was no old business to conduct.

New Business

There was no new business to conduct outside the SEQR recommendation referrals before the body.

SEQR/Chapter 48 Referrals

- a. Camp Eastman Splashpad and bathroom replacement and rental cabin exterior and interior renovations – The Town of Irondequoit owns Camp Eastman, but deed covenants preclude the town from being exempt from the City of Rochester’s zoning regulations. Pursuant to Chapter 48, Section 4, Subsection B(1)(b) of the City of Rochester’s Municipal Code on Environmental Review, actions proposed in areas zoned as open space are considered Type 1 SEQR actions. Camp Eastman is considered to be open space by the City of Rochester’s Zoning Code. Projects determined to be SEQR Type 1 actions require approval through major site plan review.

The site plan review application package submitted for this proposed project, including all drawings and the long form Environmental Assessment Form, were distributed to all members of the REC in advance of the meeting for their review. The applicant's (Town of Irondequoit) agent, Doug McCord (project manager and landscape architect) presented a brief summary of the proposed project and fielded questions from the members.

Commissioners discussed openly their various concerns, which were minimal, except for one raised by Commissioner Primus, who asked if any research had been conducted or reviewed in advance of the project's design phase. Her concern centered on whether the distance between the proposed new bathroom and proposed new Splashpad was sufficient to allow potential contaminants from the bathrooms to be dissipated before users entered the Splashpad. Mr. McCord indicated no such research had been conducted nor reviewed, and that his firm had designed and led the construction of several similar configurations without such regulatory body concerns. Mr. McCord also indicated the new Splashpad will be connected to sanitary sewer lines, which is a newer requirement in the code.

Commissioner Jonientz inquired about any first aid stations on site and whether any were planned if they did not currently exist. Mr. McCord indicated he did not believe one existed currently and that one was not planned as the park is not staffed by lifeguards or other such staff. Mr. McCord did note that the Town of Irondequoit's Department of Public Service is located adjacent to, and is visible and accessible from, the area in question.

Other commission concerns involved the current use of the cabins that are slated to be renovated; Mr. McCord indicated none are used for overnight lodging, nor will they be after renovation, which includes the installation of bathroom facilities in each of them. The cabins are used by private groups for various gatherings such as reunions, birthday parties, and the like.

A motion to recommend to the Manager of Zoning that he issue a negative SEQR declaration for this project was made by Commissioner Perez and seconded by Commissioner Schellinger. The initial vote was 3-1-0, with Commissioner Primus voting "no."

Staff explained that with just four commissioners present, they could only act with a unanimous vote, otherwise their official act would be to offer no recommendation to the Manager of Zoning due to lack of a quorum.

Commission Chair Jonientz recommended that voting occur again with the body recommending the project be neg dec'd with attendant language suggesting research should be conducted into whether the bathroom facilities should be further away from the Splashpad to mitigate contamination risk from the bathrooms.

REC voted 4-0-0 in favor.

- b. Maplewood Park Nature Center – The City of Rochester, NY, owns Maplewood Park and the existing building on the subject parcel (350 Maplewood Drive). The existing building currently serves as a training facility for City of Rochester employees. The City of Rochester proposes to renovate the building into the Maplewood Park Nature Center, install a series of paths around the portion of the park surrounding the existing building, and resurface and reconfigure the existing parking lots on site to accommodate vehicular access to the park; the plans include a

bus (un)loading zone in front of the building and four bus parking spaces. The building will be fully renovated, inside and out, including mechanicals. Pursuant to Chapter 48, Section 4, Subsection B(1)(b) of the City of Rochester's Municipal Code on Environmental Review, actions proposed in areas zoned as open space are considered Type 1 SEQR actions. Maplewood Park is considered to be open space by the City of Rochester's Zoning Code. Projects determined to be SEQR Type 1 actions require approval through major site plan review.

The site plan review application package submitted for this proposed project, including all drawings and the long form Environmental Assessment Form, were distributed to all members of the REC in advance of the meeting for their review. A Lead Agency Agreement was executed between the Manager of Zoning and the Mayor of the City of Rochester, making the Mayor the lead agency in rendering a SEQR determination. On behalf of the applicant, a team of City of Rochester Department of Environmental Services architects and planners presented a brief summary of the proposed project and fielded questions from the members.

The members were interested in what work, if any, had been done to determine and be sensitive to the importance of historic Native American populations using this land prior to European settlement. The project team noted that they had gone over and above required standards in assessing the archeological conditions on site, including a full desk-review, which was evaluated and approved by SHPO. SHPO had recommended they test the entire park to identify any archeological artifacts of significance; nothing except one arrowhead was found (and which are not considered culturally significant by SHPO). Members were also concerned with how the Olmstead theme of connectivity in the parks was being protected. The project team indicated that the primary damage to that connectivity occurred decades ago when the 104 bridge had divided the park; no division is planned in the proposed project. In addition, the project team noted they were installing much larger than typical tree specimens to replace the few that will be removed to accommodate the new paths and building renovations. It was also reported to the REC members that affiliates of the Olmstead Alliance had attended all of the public input meetings prior to the park design being finalized. The project team also noted that new lights in the park are designed with attention to the "dark sky" concept – therefore, no upward projecting light fixtures will be utilized.

Commissioner Perez motioned that the REC recommend to the Mayor that he issue a negative SEQR declaration on this project, and commissioner Primus seconded.

REC voted 4-0-0 in favor.

Meeting was adjourned.