

Special City Council Meeting
City Council Chambers

July 24, 2012
10:00 a.m.

Present: Mayor – Joyce Hudson
Council members Jeff Kennedy
Gary Fritch
Tim Strauser
Jeff Whiting
City Administrator Bruce Clymer
City Clerk / Treasurer Connie L. Dalrymple

Absent: City Attorney Mike Bacon

Press: *Gothenburg Times* - Beth Barrett

Also present: Shane Gruber, Travis Mason, Evelyn Bartlett, Sharon Meyer, George Prince, Donna Morris, Nancy Fisher, LeRoy & Elsie Cyriacks, Blaine & Steve Peterson, Lois Stanton, Paul Brakhage of LakeTec, Inc. consultants, Jennifer Swanson of DEQ, Brad Newcomb and others from the Game & Parks Commission.

Mayor Hudson opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. Advance notice and a copy of the agenda were given to the Council and members of the press. City Council meetings are conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, a copy of which is available for public inspection on the north wall of the Council Chambers.

Kennedy moved, Whiting seconded, to approve the Special Designated License requested by Monte Kenning of OK Bottle Shoppe for an August 10th Business-After-Hours event hosted by Gothenburg Tire, at 302 8th Street. Roll call vote: Yea – Fritch, Strauser, Whiting, Kennedy. Nay - none.

Whiting moved, Fritch seconded, to approve the Special Designated License requested by Monte Kenning of OK Bottle Shoppe for an August 17th Business-After-Hours event hosted by All-Points Co-op and Skyview Farms at 120 8th Street. Roll call vote: Yea –Strauser, Kennedy, Fritch, Whiting. Nay - none.

Today's meeting is a planning session on the project to reclaim Lake Helen. At the conclusion of the meeting, a date will be set for public hearing at which time the plan will be presented to the public and public comment and input will be solicited.

The primary purpose of the Lake Helen project is to eliminate the geese, because they are the problem, and to reclaim the Lake to public enjoyment without the threat of algae. The lake is currently on the State's endangered waters list.

Today's meeting is a stakeholder's meeting wherein all entities providing financial assistance in the project will offer information and requirements into the project plan. The Environmental Trust Fund, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Economic Development, and the Game & Parks Commission are involved. Paul Brakhage of LakeTec Inc., a company with extensive experience in reclaiming public water areas, began by offering a schedule of events

that incorporates the August 29 deadline for submitting grant requests. After today, it will be hard to revise the design of the lake because, while minor changes can occur, the budget will be final.

The proposed master plan includes:

- Eliminating the smaller north lake
- Deepening the south lake to 15 feet
- Seeding the banks and planting tall grasses as a buffer to discourage ducks / geese
- Constructing a trail around the lake with an entrance and parking areas.
- Constructing a boat ramp for small craft
- Constructing three jetties to provide fishing areas and to break up the open space, thereby discouraging water fowl
- Install handicap access to parking and lake access

The canal is one source of water for the lake but we need to install a screening system to eliminate rough fish and debris that come from the canal. The screening process is relatively new but the Game & Parks Commission has approved the process and we can use predator fish, such as bass, to eliminate the other rough fish population. The screen will need to be cleaned daily when in operation. The current sediment load is 36,000 pounds. The bio-swale and screen will eliminate sediment and catch leaves and branches, etc.

According to Travis Mason of Miller & Assoc., we can also install a grid cable system that makes it nearly impossible for geese to land on the lake. The system is set 12 inches above the water and could be winched out during migration season. The jetties decrease the surface area of the lake and therefore inhibit water fowl from landing.

Paul Brakhage told Council it will take approximately ten years for the lake to recover from one year of geese on the lake. Unfortunately, his staff has not been able to find any lakes the size of Lake Helen that have been cabled. Lake Helen is a large lake by community standards and Gothenburg is breaking new ground in water fowl control and reclamation. Other options to control the goose population might be to paint the eggs, bring in other birds of prey such as swans, or a dog, or to spray the grass. Additional traffic on the trails will also deter the geese. A lake in Lincoln that was drained for one and a half years eliminated migratory and residential water fowl. It is imperative that we continue to not allow the geese to be fed.

We'll need an additional 20 acre feet of water annually to keep the lake full and can anticipate that amount from the existing well. However, it's proposed to install a split line for two water entrances from the well into the lake. This will provide better circulation and reduce water temperature to eliminate the blue-green algae that is present now. Storm water run-off will be slowed or deterred by the swale and grass buffer around the perimeter of the lake. This cost is included in the cost projections and meets EPA desires.

Shane Gruber commented that if the north lake is filled in we will need to extend the sprinkler system that is already needs replaced. We use well water to irrigate the park. In current weather conditions (consistently upper 90's into 100's & dry), the lake drops two inches a week. The

water level can be raised four to six inches in 10 days using the well, less time using the canal. If we have one lake, we will require less water than the 300 acre feet we now pay for.

The Game & Parks Commission can help with the control of the resident flock of water fowl. The City has already tried lasers and fencing.

Administrator Clymer had several questions:

- When would we drain the lake and for how long? With the current resident geese numbers is a two year drain better than six months?
- When can we anticipate receiving stakeholder funds?
- How long will 'construction' take?

Per Paul Brakhage, we should see the first funding in May 2013 but we'll know in February if the Environmental Trust money is approved. We should drain the lake then, and keep it dry through the spring 2014 migration. If we are ranked high with the DEQ and the Environmental Trust organizations, he would suggest starting then even though there is some risk, without documented approval.

Shane Gruber reminded all that we'll need to start early in the spring as we lose access to the canal on April 15.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Strauser, seconded by Kennedy, to set August 7 at 7:00 p.m. as the date for a public comment meeting on the Lake Helen reclamation project. Roll call vote: Yea – Fritch, Kennedy, Strauser, Whiting. Nay – none. At that time, representatives of the Game & Parks Commission and Environmental Protection Agency will be present to answer questions and provide cost and financial assistance information.

Kennedy moved, Whiting seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 a.m. Roll call vote: Yea – Strauser, Fritch, Whiting, Kennedy. Nay – none.

After the meeting, informal discussion was had with citizens wherein the City and state agencies explained the issues with the lake and the actions taken so far. It was also noted that all water in the state of Nebraska belongs to the state and they are well aware of the condition of Lake Helen. State and federal agencies set the requirements for reclaiming the lake and part of that process is reducing the size of the lake. Those same agencies will assist with the cost of the multi-million dollar project. The process has been accomplished in other communities, Kearney for example, with great success.

The community center, tennis court, and soccer field shown on the first site plan are only to provide options for use of the space and to help understand how much space is available. There are no plans for any of those things at the present time.

Joyce Hudson, Mayor

Connie L Dalrymple