



Mike Katrin, left, and Mike Ward, members of the city’s EDA Advisory Board, discuss a strategic plan with the EDA Commission Monday. The commission will revisit the plan in March.

EDA

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Four recommendations were brought to the commission: minimal initial investment in construction of a trail, which is required in the acquisition agreement; construction of a monument, also required in the agreement, that can be easily moved should the site be developed; work with user groups and neighbors to ensure the site does not become degraded; explore annexing the property.

Steve Shermoen, a member of the advisory board, said the board felt strongly the traditional uses, except hunting, continue on the property. He said he believed liability occurs when hunting is mixed with trail designation and the city’s encouragement people use the property. In addition, he suggested certain portions of the property be designated for all-terrain vehicles and ATVs be prohibited on other trails to avoid damaging them.

He was joined at the meeting by board members Mike Katrin and Mike Ward.

Shermoen said the board also recommends exploring annexation. “It’s not something at this time that should be pushed forward,” he said. “It may be an appropriate step at some point, even in the near future”

Commissioner Paul Eklund said while he didn’t attend the visioning ses-

sions, the ARDC report made it clear people don’t want the city to invest a lot of money in the property, but want the city to keep ownership of it.

Other commissioners agreed minimum actions should be taken at a minimal cost.

Meanwhile, Shermoen answered questions posed by Anderson about the property. Shermoen said the city has entered a contract and does not need to wait until the final payment is made to move forward with the recommendation.

“The city owns the property now,” Shermoen said. “There is an obligation to honor the contract or try to get out of it. That’s a question for the council.”

Anderson said he agreed the property should be legally posted to prohibit hunting, but wondered if the agreement included hunting rights for nearby residents. “I want to make sure we comply with the contract,” he said.

EDA Director Shawn Mason in an email Tuesday provided documentation saying three people were allowed to hunt on the property until the 2011 hunting season.

Strategic plan

The commission on a 3-2 vote rejected adoption of an EDA strategic plan with goals for 2014-15. The document, developed by the EDA Advisory Board, includes five goals with action steps and outcomes.

Voting no were Commissioners Pete Kalar, Cyn-

thia Jaksa and Anderson. Anderson said he wanted more time to consider the three-page plan, which he said he had just recently received. Kalar said he had no problem with holding action on the plan for another month.

The commission will revisit the plan at the March meeting. Mason noted the plan had been emailed to commissioners one week earlier.

Katrin and Ward presented the plan to the commission and said they, and possibly other members who were unavailable Monday, would return to answer questions.

Anderson questioned the use of a facilitator at a cost of \$350 to develop the plan. The cost, he said, is why he voted against approval of the accounts payable earlier in the meeting.

Katrin said a facilitator keeps the plan on track and brings back revisions. Mason said a facilitator provides an unbiased view.

Jaksa said not enough money had been spent on a facilitator and she suggested using someone in the economic development industry in the future.

But Kalar said the board has developed two plans and may not need a facilitator in the future.

Meanwhile, some commission members said the document appeared to have been well-thought-out and is specific enough its success could be evaluated in one year.

DERBY

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Peterson said about 100 fish were registered, including a northern pike that weighed about 16 pounds.

“We did see a good number of fish come in,” he said. “That’s good to see, too.”

All in all, Peterson said the about 1,500 raffle tickets sold should help the club break even on the event. Norstad added that it will be challenging for the club to recoup losses from its biggest fundraiser.

“Money from the derby helps us stock the kids fishing pond and put on the senior fish fry in the fall,” he said. “We’ll still find a way to do those things, but it’ll be a lot harder.”

Still, Norstad said a lot of money went back into the community for prizes. “That’s always a positive thing,” he said. “A lot of money stays local for the prizes purchased so it does help out the community.”

And at least anglers were able to access the lake, he said.

“Lake of the Woods had

to close down its ice roads because of the snow,” he said. “Our roads may have had some drifts on it, but at least they were open.”

Because this was the first year the club attempted to hold the derby on a Saturday rather than Sunday, Norstad says what day the derby will be held next year has not been decided.

“I don’t think the day really matters, it boils down to the weather,” he said. “There’s a 50-50 chance it’ll be perfect weather for an event like this. It’s like rolling dice to see what happens.”

COUNTY

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Director Teresa Briggs said, and would have to come out of contingency funds.

If the application is approved, the board will make the final decision, Briggs said.

“Even at this point, it’s not a binding agreement, the county can still consider whether or not, if it is accepted into the program, whether or not to proceed,” Briggs said.

At a previous county board meeting with representatives from Silicon Energy, representatives said they thought only about six to 10 entities would apply in the region, and each region has its own lottery.

At an International Falls City Council meeting in November, representatives told officials they could save about \$400,000 in electricity costs over 40 years if they were to go forward with the program. They said the county would save a similar amount over the

same period of time. The city opted not to move forward.

Because the grant lottery takes place annually, if the county’s application isn’t selected for 2014, Silicon Energy will resubmit the application for 2015.

“If you didn’t want to do it this year, you could apply for next year as well,” Briggs said.

On the issues of renewable energy or saving energy costs, it’s a good sign for government to be leading the way, Commissioner Wade Pavleck said. He noted the St. Louis County Courthouse uses a large array of solar panels similar to the ones the Forestland Building would use.

“To me it seems as government we should be out front on these issues,” Pavleck said. “It’s time for us to get on board.”

In other business, Koochiching County Land Commissioner Dennis Hummitchsch notified the board of an upcoming meeting on the early Rainy River open water walleye season com-

ing up in the spring.

The meeting is planned for 10 a.m. March 5 at the Koochiching County Courthouse, in the county board room. On the agenda for the meeting are issues like ramp needs and improvements, enforcement of parking and inspections, overflow parking, and local community concerns or benefits.

The spring open water walleye season on Rainy River is the first in the state, and draws anglers from throughout the Midwest. In an email provided to the board, Assistant Land Commissioner Tom Morris said use last year was the highest of any year. Last June, Hummitchsch said the influx of boats and motors led to “very congested” parking at the Nelson Park access road in Birchdale.

The topics on the agenda for the March meeting are to address the issues related to the overflow of anglers. Commissioners Wayne Skoe and Kevin Adee expressed their intent to attend the meeting.

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