



Addenda
Minnetonka Park Board
Meeting of February 2, 2022

ITEM 7B – Volunteer Restoration Project Review Process

- Attached is feedback receive after the packet was distributed.

From: [Leslie Yetka](#)
To: "[sabrina Harvey](#)"; [Diana Houston](#)
Cc: [Janet VanSloun](#); [Christine Petersen](#)
Subject: RE: Volunteer Program
Date: Wednesday, February 2, 2022 9:23:02 AM

Hi Sabrina,

Thanks for your feedback. I will include your email as an addendum to the Park Board report today so the PB members will see. I've provided responses in your email below in red to answer your specific questions.

Before answering some of your questions, it is important to note that the application process you reviewed that is going the Park Board today is not a volunteer program. It is meant to be a process of developing volunteer-led activities that we as staff can review and approve. This process will eventually become one part of implementing a larger volunteer program, which you haven't seen yet. It is a little 'putting the cart before the horse', but was necessary because of the volume of park restoration project proposals that have been submitted to the city for this coming year. At a Park Board meeting last fall, the Friends of Lone Lake Park submitted a project proposal. The Park Board members found it difficult to weigh the merits of the proposal because they didn't know what factors to consider. This process being presented to the Park Board is an attempt to address their concerns.

Also, we are developing a whole suite of new public engagement efforts, from a structured volunteer program (including trained habitat stewards, similar to master gardeners or master naturalists), technical assistance for landowners, an incentive program, and education and training. I want to clarify that these new programs and structures are not being developed specifically *for* the Friends of Minnetonka Parks, but are being developed with a specific focus of engaging as many new people and different groups as we can (e.g. FoMP, youth groups, faith based groups, families, non-English speaking groups, business community, HOA's). We can only achieve our goals of protecting natural resources by engaging as many people as possible, as I'm sure you would agree. Thus, while FOMP may be highly involved in this early phase and we welcome the interest and enthusiasm and feedback that members of FOMP provide, I just want to clarify that we are not developing shared programming specifically *with* FOMP at this time. We are developing city programming that FOMP and anyone else can participate in. From a volunteer perspective, this is similar to UMN Extension's Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs, or Freshwater Society's Minnesota Water Stewards program. Overall, we see our programs serving people and accomplishing work beyond just parks, extending to the whole of the community.

As I mention below, I will have Christine set up a time in the next month or so to meet and discuss our volunteer programming in more detail to gain your feedback. Happy to do that!

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks for your feedback.

Leslie

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From: sabrina Harvey [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 31, 2022 8:04 AM
To: Leslie Yetka <lyetka@minnetonkamn.gov>; Christine Petersen <cpetersen@minnetonkamn.gov>
Cc: Janet VanSloun <jvansloun@minnetonkamn.gov>; Diana Houston [REDACTED]

Subject: Volunteer Program

Hi Leslie,

Thank you for sharing the draft documents with us and giving us an opportunity to pilot the new Volunteer Program with you. FoMP envisions a collaborative, long-term relationship with city staff in order to maintain healthy plant and wildlife communities in our parks and restore degraded ones. In discussing the documents you sent, we identified a few questions regarding them, but many more questions about the Volunteer Program as a whole. For example:

- Habitat restoration is a carefully planned, multi-year process. We are happy to be working with you on 2022 plans but are concerned that, without a commitment to developing long-term plans, volunteer efforts may simply become annual events to remove invasive species. This will not restore habitat and will probably discourage volunteers. Let's talk about how we can work with you to develop long-term, park-specific restoration plans. **Agreed. We will be developing long term park-specific restoration and maintenance plans that will build on what is in the NRMP, as is outlined in the NRMP Appendix A. However, we are not there yet, and we already have proposals that have been submitted for individual parks. So, in essence, we have to work with what we have now. The Appendix A information will be our guide until we can develop the more refined long-term plans. And yes, we will include FOMP and others who have an interest and want to weigh in on the long-term plans. More to come on that.**
- The Project/Work Plan Application is well-thought-out, but we have questions about the approval process. We're aware that Natural Resources works with many volunteer groups who may not be willing or able to complete such a thorough document; few FoMP members have the expertise to complete this document. We are looking to you for definition of target plant communities, detailed restoration steps, and identification of costs. If volunteers simply want to work on an invasive species removal, will they be required to submit this document? **Over time, we see the project application as something that gets filled out and submitted by a city-trained and certified habitat steward who has the working knowledge of target plant communities and restoration steps (information that is already found in the plans we've received to-date). We don't have habitat stewards yet as we are still developing the program. Until that happens, we will work with the individuals who already submitted the plans and adapt as needed. The Appendix A of the NRMP has the information related to target plant communities that anyone can look up. If a volunteer simply wants to work on invasive species removal, yes they should submit a plan or at least work directly with staff as part of our Adopt-a-Spot program, depending on scale and scope. There should not be volunteers working by themselves on city property without city staff approval.**
- Are there other volunteer groups that have a long-term perspective, like FoMP, as opposed to a willingness to volunteer on occasion? Will the city coordinate efforts between volunteer groups? What are the roles and responsibilities of a habitat steward? What will training entail and when will it be available? **While we do not have groups quite like FOMP, we do regularly work with groups such as geocachers, adopt-a-spot volunteers, scouting groups, and dedicated individuals who regularly participate in volunteer activities. It is our hope that, by creating a project proposal process and focusing on more long-term restoration led by habitat stewards in conjunction with city staff, that new and diverse volunteers become involved who may not have been in the past. Our goals is always to encourage new people to participate and become engaged in natural resource work. We are still developing elements of the volunteer program (such as the habitat stewards and training) that we want to pilot this spring. We are happy to meet to discuss and get feedback on this. I will let Christine coordinate getting a meeting together, as she is doing much of the work.**

We realize this program is a pilot and is evolving, but as your 'co-pilots', we ask to participate in designing the program, rather than learning about it after decisions are made. We would like to meet with you to discuss all the components of the program and a timeline for their development. Diana and I are available

tomorrow, Tuesday, before 2:00. If that doesn't work, let us know a couple other times and I will coordinate. We also ask that, in your presentation to the Park Board, you indicate that you will be collaborating with FoMP as the program evolves. **I will let Christine set up a time in the next few weeks.** Thank you - and we look forward to working with you.
Sabrina Harvey