



**Minutes
Minnetonka Park Board
Wednesday, January 5, 2022**

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Park Board Members Present: Korey Beyersdorf, James Durbin, Chris Gabler, David Ingraham, Ben Jacobs and Chris Walick. Excused: Katie Semersky and Elliot Berman.

Staff members in attendance: Darin Ellingson, Kelly O'Dea, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka.

Gabler called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

3. Reports from Staff

Recreation Director, Kelly O'Dea reported that tonight was Berman's last meeting, however he was unable to attend. He thanked Berman for doing a great job while serving as the student representative on the board. O'Dea hopes to have a new student member for the February meeting.

4. Approval of Minutes

Jacobs moved, Ingraham seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of Dec. 1, 2021 as submitted. Walick abstained. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

There were none.

6. Special Matters

Linda Russell gave a presentation on restoration at Lone Lake Park. The presentation is attached at the end of the minutes.

Ingraham complimented them on their effort. He asked if there is an update on how many trees might come out.

Natural Resources Manager, Leslie Yetka replied that at this point there has not been any kind of inventory work done. A cursory examination was done but there is not an actual number.

7. Business Items

A. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

Recreation Director, Kelly O'Dea gave the report.

Walick moved, Ingraham seconded a motion to appoint Chris Gabler as park board chair for a term beginning Feb. 1, 2022 and running through Jan. 31, 2023. All voted "yes". Motion carried.

Durbin moved and Jacobs seconded a motion to appoint Chris Walick as park board vice-chair for a term beginning Feb. 1, 2022 and running through Jan. 31, 2023. All voted "yes". Motion carried.

B. Review of Park Maintenance Strategies

Street and Park Operations Manager, Darin Ellingson gave the report.

Gabler commented that they do a pretty good job. He remembers trying to fix one park and they spent \$200,000 trying to keep it maintained. Gabler thought it seemed like they were short staffed based on needs.

Ellingson replied that sometimes but not all the time. You get your peaks and valleys. There are times when they are trying to find things for people to do and there are other times when they are swamped.

Gabler questioned if hiring seasonal employees is okay or if it is getting tougher.

Ellingson answered that it has been tougher. When he first started about 10 years ago, they hired 16 people and turned people away. They probably received 20 to 30 applications. Two years ago was really hard but last year wasn't so bad even with COVID-19. This year, all of their positions filled but it took a little while to get them all.

Durbin appreciated Ellingson putting the report together. It definitely puts into a nice package of how complicated his job is and everything that needs to be done. He thinks it is really neat that seasonal help is used. Durbin sees that there are possible staff shortages on some of those field maintenance crews during the summer months. He thinks they don't actually get to all of the fields as often as you want. He would be a very big proponent of lobbying for more money. Just like the natural resources budget could be increased, he thinks their budget for maintaining could also be increased. For winter, he sees other cities getting to the trails faster but now after this presentation, he sees that you have to borrow people just to get the primary work done. You don't have a staff of 25 people waiting to get on the equipment. In other cities, they've prioritized what they want to do so they get those roads plowed and trails cleaned on the same day. Right after the plows are done, they start getting the trails opened up. It is a city priority due to some of those newer paved trails and sidewalks. You could do more if you had more money and he thinks that there would be great city support for that. Durbin also thinks that the work done on the hockey rinks is so cool. He thinks they are appreciated by so many of the youth in Minnetonka. Hopefully we always have the cold weather so you can make great ice.

Ingraham complimented the presentation and the work they do. It was very helpful in terms of the extent and the magnitude of what goes on. He is always impressed after snowfalls with how early Purgatory Park and the Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail are plowed. They have been plowed before his streets were plowed and it is impressive on how quickly that gets done. Ingraham questioned how we watch for falling tree issues. Is

there a scouting effort to identify those and take preventative actions early or does sometimes nature happen and you can't do anything about it?

Ellingson answered not really. With 105 miles of trails in addition to the 1,200 acres of parkland, for him, he looks at all these trees and he just sees bad and would cut them all down. That is not going to happen but they are an accident waiting to happen. It isn't feasible to scout every tree but people report seeing them. There are things with trees that you might not be able to tell just by looking at them. For example, if a tree is hollow or a tree could get uprooted by a wind storm. There could be a high branch and they can't drive through with a bucket truck and inspect the canopies. It would be nice to eliminate that risk but it's really not feasible.

Ingraham asked if staff would check on something if someone reported it.

Ellingson replied that it absolutely would get checked out because that is where their liability is. If something is reported to staff and they do not respond, they would likely be liable. For example, if someone reports a tree that has a big crack in the trunk and three weeks go by and nothing is done and it falls and hurts somebody, more than likely they would be liable for that. That is because they were made aware of a hazard and they needed to address it in a timely manner. If staff receives a report and it is early enough in the day, generally it will be looked at on the same day or they would likely get to it the next day.

Ingraham commented that buried down in the standards is a little thing about signs. Signs are kind of his one deal relative to their level of attractiveness, maintenance and the messaging. He was curious if that is something that their department would be primarily worried about. He is aware that they would do the maintenance on it but he questioned if there was somebody else in the parks department that would go look at the signs and figure out the plans on replacing them or updating the content. He wondered how that worked.

Ellingson answered that anything content related is really a bigger item. If you see anything on the signs, such as the interpretive signs, let staff know about them. They want people that visits the parks to let them know. This year in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) we have a page set aside to do a big signage project. We have \$450,000 designated for all new signage this year. Hopefully all park monument signs, wayfinding signs, map signs and all the park rules signs will be done this summer. It will be a big reset to get everything nice and fresh for a long time in the future.

C. Addition of Recycling Receptacles in Community Parks

Ellingson gave the report.

Durbin thanked Ellingson for this. He realizes how difficult this is; it looks easy but it's not. For two years at the largest company in Minnesota, the fifth largest company in the United States, which is also ranked 13 in the largest companies on the planet, he worked on green initiatives. Everything that seems so easy, isn't so easy and he gets that. He knows your connections and has worked with Hennepin County Business Recycling and WasteWise. Things are complicated and sometimes they cost money. When you are doing something that is right, it is worth that investment. He thinks this is in line with all the things they do as a park board such as protecting natural resources and giving the

city a good look. When people come into our parks, it's like we don't recycle at our parks. Durbin thinks it is really good to start small and see how things work and then make changes; don't go big or go home when it comes to something like this because it is much easier to grow. Durbin asked if staff has been able to get a grant through Hennepin County.

Ellingson will check with Hennepin County about that. He is pretty sure that the grant funding that they had set aside for parks ended two or three years ago.

Durbin commented that he might have to call some former park board members to tell them about this because they have been bugging him about it. The work is appreciated.

Gabler was skeptical on how well it can be managed. The reason is because they tried to do it at Bennett Park and people are going to do what people do unless you are standing there telling them where to put it. It's a great idea but the education piece is huge. He probably visits 100 different parks in 100 different communities every year and a lot of them do recycling and the recycling bins are filled with trash because people do what people do. He is glad we are doing it but similar to what Durbin said, people think that this is really easy and it is easy in theory, however, it is very difficult to change behavior. A lot of times he thinks it is a victory when we can get people to throw trash in an actual trash container rather than on the ground. He thinks we should tell people that this is going to take a while to take effect and they should be patient. It isn't going to be perfect next year, but it is going to be marginally better the next year and he thinks it will be three to five years before people really start to figure out where to put their cans and bottles. He has seen this at different parks in different states so people are the same everywhere and it is just human nature. Personally, he hopes it works and he thinks it will but it might take longer than what people realize.

Ellingson commented that there will be signs telling people to put cans and bottles in the recycling. They are going to make it as hard as it can be to get anything but a bottle and a can in there. A two-liter bottle would have to go in the trash because people won't be able to fit it in there.

Gabler hopes that people don't complain about it. People could say this is great that it's being done, but then come back saying that people aren't checking to see what is in there and question what staff is doing. He wants to keep people away from that but people are going to do what they do. We are going to have to change behavior and that always takes time.

Durbin agrees that in the perfect world, it won't be perfect. However, you have to try to do something. There are best practices that help with this behavioral psychology. If you get some success with signs and putting items in the right containers, that is the best practices. If you get some recyclables in the recycling container, that is less stuff out of the landfill and less stuff out of the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center. Anything is going to help.

8. Park Board Member Reports

Ingraham mentioned that they got a letter from Sabrina Harvey about Hilloway Park and he asked if anyone responded to it. The letter was about the natural resources restoration issue.

Durbin questioned if he was talking about the bog at Hilloway Park.

Ellingson replied that staff was not aware of the bog. The storm sewer infrastructure and that discharge doesn't fall under the Natural Resources Master Plan so it really isn't part of that purview. If the marsh area was inspected or something like that as part of the plan then it would be. As far as a park maintenance item, it doesn't really fall into that area either especially in Hilloway Park, a mostly natural park. If it is close to a trail and people are on the trail, we hope they notice and say something. It has not been brought to his attention so he assumes people didn't notice it if they were on the trail. They would expect something like this more in a maintained park such as Spring Hill or Boulder Creek. There are pipes and drain systems within the parks so that is something they would expect to hear from our parks staff as far as a maintenance item for storm sewer. Storm sewer is maintained by a drainage crew under the streets department. It still falls under him and it would be something the maintenance crew would fix. Engineering has a staff that inspects our storm sewer system so roughly a fourth of the city's infrastructure storm sewers are inspected in a year. About four years it takes to go through the city's catch basins and outfalls. He assumes this hasn't been inspected within the last four years and may be coming up. If they see that, they would write a work order and get it on their plates. They will look at it as part of the drainage crew and get that erosion fixed. They will see if anything got into the marsh area, as well as what it will take to remove it and fill in the areas that were washed out and stabilize them.

Ingraham just wanted confirmation that someone responded or will be responding to her.

Ellingson said yes.

9. Information Items

POST Plan

Recreation Assistant Director, Sara Woeste gave the report.

Winter/Spring Program Registration

Woeste gave the report.

Natural Resource Master Plan

Woeste gave the report.

Boulder Creek Park – added information item

Ellingson said that for several years they've had a really hard time getting ice on the rink at Boulder Creek Park. They purchased a liner this year for \$2,000 that is 200 feet long by 100 feet wide to put on the rink before they flooded it. It is an asphalt rink that was built with a tilt so it can shed water in the summertime. When they fill the rink with water, due to the tilt they have a 14 inch thick area on the northwest side of the rink and a six inch thick area on the south end, which is the higher end. They had a good five inches last week and started doing snow removal with walk-behind snowblowers and shovels; they graduated to a bigger snowblower and found out the hard way that they weren't quite ready for that. The snowblower broke through the liner and they found a couple of holes in it. They are in the process of getting that ice built back in that corner and hopefully they will get some ice again soon. He doesn't think they will lose any ice this winter but they'll see how the rest of the season goes.

10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

11. Adjournment

Walick moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline

Kathy Kline
Recreation Administrative Coordinator



FRIENDS OF 
LONE LAKE PARK



**LONE LAKE
PARK
POLLINATOR
PROJECTS**

January 5, 2022

Park Board
Meeting



Two
project
sites
(third to
be
proposed
in future)

- Trailhead Marker
- Mowed Trail
- Interpretive Sign

Alignment with NRMP Goals

- Improve the quality of habitat in Minnetonka parks and open spaces, striving for more resilient and sustainable ecological systems while providing multiple benefits to the community.
- Manage and improve the community forest ecosystem on both public and private lands, including natural woodlands and the altered ecosystem of the traditional managed landscape.
- Engage the public to support ecological restoration and management on public property.

Alignment with POST Goals

- Provide opportunities for people to connect with nature
- Provide for a healthy park experience that is accessible, enjoyable, and relatable to all park users
- Encourage recreation participation by all park users regardless of race, age, gender, or ability

Aspen Grove: Our Progress in 2021



**Garlic Mustard
Removal
June 2021**

**Seeding
November 2021**

**Buckthorn Blitz
October 2021**

**Buckthorn Blitz 2
November 2021**

Volunteering in 2021

- Three volunteer events, plus seeding
- 28 distinct volunteers
- 109.75 hours of invasive species removal
- 2 hours of seeding



Before
Buckthorn
Blitzes
(October)



After
Buckthorn
Blitzes
(mid
November)



Next Steps

Meet with staff

Get timeline set for tree removal

Remove undesirable trees

Remove new garlic mustard and buckthorn

Prep area next to Aspen Grove and on Playground Pollinator walk site

Spread wood chips

Plant seeds and plants in new areas



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