



**Minutes
Minnetonka Park Board
Wednesday, March 2, 2022**

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Park board members present: Korey Beyersdorf, James Durbin, Chris Gabler, David Ingraham, Ben Jacobs, Katie Semersky, Isabelle Stroh and Chris Walick.

Staff members in attendance: Darin Ellingson, Kathy Kline, Matt Kumka, 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 there was an addendum.

4. Approval of Minutes

Walick moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of Feb. 2, 2022, as submitted. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

There were none.

6. Special Matters

Mary Hammill represented the Friends of Meadow Park and presented on the restoration at Meadow Park. The presentation was included in the March 2, 2022, park board packet.

Diana Houston represented the Friends of Big Willow Park and presented on the restoration at Big Willow Park. The presentation was included in the March 2, 2022, park board packet.

Gabler said they bring a lot of kids from the transition plus program in the spring and fall and they spend a lot of time walking through the park. It's been a great thing for them.

Houston stressed that they would be happy to take them on a tour of any park to learn more.

Gabler thanked Hammill and Houston for their presentations. Meadow Park brings him back to many years ago when he used to be a warming house attendant there. He has seen that park change over the years as well.

7. Business Items

A. Draft POST Plan Public Comment Review

Assistant Recreation Director, Sara Woeste gave the report. She presented public feedback for each chapter, the proposed edits, and asked for feedback from the park board members. Public comment was also available for anyone calling into the meeting or in-person.

Chapter One: Introduction

Proposed edits:

- Add some language about the joint agreement with the City of Hopkins. This is to make people aware of the joint agreement right away in the introduction and give that background. It is mentioned in a chapter later on but it will also be in the introduction.
- Add ecological restoration in the introduction text. There is some text that talks about a list of areas that are identified for improvement so they would like to add ecological restoration to that list.
- Update some kind of the language on the key takeaways from existing plans. There were some comments that we agreed with and will make those changes.

Woeste said the comments that are highlighted in the table are the ones staff is suggesting to make edits to. She asked for feedback from the park board.

Stroh said someone suggested taking tennis courts that weren't being used and converting them into pickleball courts. She thought that was a really good point and it would save some space. Pickleball courts are increasing in popularity but those tennis courts are multimillion-dollar courts. She feels as though that is something that would require a lot of thought before converting several of the tennis courts into pickleball courts.

Woeste thanked Stroh for her comment. She said she will soon be addressing how we are going to put pickleball into our facility guidelines as an option in neighborhood parks.

Chapter Two: Trends

Woeste explained that there were more requests for additional pickleball courts in this chapter. There was also some support and opposition regarding the focus on climate resiliency throughout the whole packet.

Proposed edits:

- Add language in the introduction stating that the trends are in no particular order. Woeste thought that was good feedback because some people questioned if it was ordered from one through eight with one being the most important. It's not, so they will add that text in the introduction to chapter two.
- Add neighborhood park as a location option in table four. In chapter six there are guidelines saying that if they want to have an amenity like pickleball courts, what kind of park should they consider putting them in. In the original draft, only community parks were listed because staff and former park board members thought because of pickleball's popularity, it would draw big crowds and they

should only be in community parks. Staff thinks neighborhood parks can be added as an option so that in the future as we reconstruct tennis courts, if a neighborhood park is appropriate, maybe one can become a pickleball court. It wouldn't necessarily be a huge complex but as we reconstruct some of these tennis courts, if the park board agrees, we can consider that potentially in some neighborhood parks. With the facility guidelines, keep in mind that these amenities would go through a public approval process. If we decide we want a pickleball court in a neighborhood park, staff would notify the neighborhood and get feedback. By considering a neighborhood park, this is one way of showing that we think we could expand our options for more pickleball courts. Woeste asked for the park board's opinion on whether or not they agree with considering neighborhood parks for future pickleball courts that could be repurposed tennis courts.

Gabler thought it was something they should talk about. He thinks it will be interesting if all of a sudden they start talking about it and then the tennis courts become used more. Futsal is also being used on tennis courts, he questioned if that will lead to more discussions about that in neighborhood parks.

Woeste commented that this just opens up the door for having the possibility of adding it into a neighborhood park. It would have to go through an approval process to make it happen. This is just saying we would consider it in the future.

Ingraham thinks it will be interesting to hear feedback from neighbors if they start proposing to transition some of the tennis courts. This is only because he knows pickleball is extremely popular and is pretty noisy. At Lone Lake Park, the pickleball courts are much more intrusive into the environment relative to sound than the mountain bike trails. He thinks of GroTonka Park or somewhere like that where there is space for it and the courts could be converted. He is supportive of the addition of neighborhood parks but it will be interesting to hear the feedback from the neighborhoods if it comes to that.

Durbin thinks it is good to open up the possibility for pickleball in neighborhood parks. Right now with the popularity of pickleball you can put it anywhere as long as there is parking for people and they will play. Ingraham made a great comment on the public input to see if the neighbors actually want it there. Durbin also has concern of transitioning tennis courts into pickleball courts because then you are taking away something from people who are using them. That was done for the Futsal court but he doesn't know how much that court is being used. He thinks part of the calculus has to be figuring out how much these current amenities are being used before they would even consider transitioning them. For this high-level document, they should add neighborhood parks where parking is not limited so they can be considered.

Walick liked the idea of opening it up. He has no worries that staff would find a way to balance pickleball and tennis. He likes the idea of being able to repurpose things that aren't being used. If there is one tennis court being used one day a week and another tennis court two miles away that is only being used one day a week, we could combine those. That would be much cheaper than building something new and we would be using the land that is already there.

Woeste heard general support for adding that so she thinks that is an edit they will make. Keep in mind there could be multi-use courts too for tennis and pickleball. That takes a

little work using different equipment and adding different lines but it is an option. We have heard throughout this process that things should be multi-use so make sure you are thinking long-term and if things can be used for different functions.

Chapter 3: Existing Conditions

Woeste explained that this was the chapter on demographics, park classifications and public engagement. There were several comments reacting to the public engagement and different opinions on the information that was in the packet and the survey responses. In the addendum, there was concern regarding the change of classifications. There was a concern that taking away community preserve made it a down-grade, but it does not. We changed the park classifications by giving each park a status of mini park, neighborhood park or community park based on its size and its service but it may also be a preserve. For example, Purgatory Park is a community park and it is still designated as a preserve. Anything that would go into a preserve area would still have to be passive in use. It is not a downgrade, it is just a different way of consistency by giving each park a status of mini, neighborhood or community based on its size. An exception would be those that are special use such as the marina.

Proposed Edits:

- There was confusion on the classification table and map because they were called parks and open space classification table and park and open space classification map. Open space is going to be removed because what staff was referring to is city owned park property. There are open spaces within the parks but it was a little confusing.
- There was a request for a definition of what natural surface is, so staff is going to add that to the glossary. It was kind of embedded within the formal trail definition and is a natural surface trail which is crushed limestone, compacted soil or mulch. There were a few comments on that so they have added it in for clarification.

Chapter 4: Vision

Woeste explained that this is the mission and the guiding principles that were previously open to public comment and park board feedback a few months back. There was general satisfaction with this chapter.

Proposed edits:

Under the guiding principle titled “Excellence and Innovation”, staff is proposing a few changes based on the comments.

- Add wording under the third bullet to say, “Meet increasing demand and provide funding for informal and passive recreation and restoration opportunities.”
- Add an additional bullet that states, “Parks, open spaces and trails will retain their excellence through timely and ongoing maintenance.”

Staff has heard the desire for funding and the desire for maintenance throughout this entire process so she thought those were important additions.

Gabler questioned if we added “and provide funding”, are we saying it is 100 percent funding or is it funding in a private/public partnership type of thing. Does that open us up

to have people get mad if you can't fund something that year and they have to wait a couple of years?

Woeste thought just like any amenity or activity, we can't always fund everything we want to do 100 percent. This is just saying we are making an emphasis on trying to find funding for these informal and passive opportunities and there is a desire from the community.

Ingraham asked if pursue would be a better word.

Gabler liked that. He thinks Ingraham is right and thought the word "provide" sounds like the city is 100 percent responsible. He thought people would look at that.

Durbin would be happy even if it was left out completely and kept the way it was. He doesn't mind it but obviously everything costs money; nothing is free except for volunteer hours so it is just putting something in there that they already knew. The second bullet that was proposed to be added, he wants to put something in there saying that we adequately fund project maintenance costs and increases.

Gabler thinks pursue might be the happy compromise in that.

Woeste said she is hearing some mixed reactions.

Durbin responded that if we are increasing demand for informal and passive recreation and restoration opportunities, those opportunities cost money so it is kind of obvious. He doesn't know why we have to put that in there.

Ingraham agreed with Durbin. By definition, everything we do at some point requires funding.

Durbin wanted some kind of comment to match that under the maintenance one. He liked the second bullet as it is and he kind of liked the first bullet as it is.

Walick asked with this whole document being lofty goals and kind of vision if there is something near the beginning that mentions that these are not statements saying that we are going to do these items. Even the second bullet about parks retaining their excellence, somebody could get upset because they view it is not maintaining the excellence. Is there a broad statement that these are driving goals and not a specific list of things we are required to do.

Woeste said the entire plan itself is a plan and guide. You could not make a decision to fulfil every single statement in this plan. These are guides for us, so she thinks as a whole, it's a high-level planning document to help guide decision making. It is not an ordinance but it is what we heard from the public; they are the goals and initiatives that we would like to attempt to follow when making decisions.

Walick says we know that but others might not. He is just thinking of worst case scenarios.

Woeste said she is looking for a few more opinions on whether to remove or keep either pursue or provide funding.

Walick was fine with it, but said it could go.

Semersky said to drop it.

Woeste agreed once Durbin framed it as meet the increasing demand; it does imply funding as well.

Semersky said to suspect everything in that innovative guiding principle is going to require funding.

Stroh said someone will go through this whole thing and nitpick everything and then get mad if something isn't fulfilled.

Gabler agreed that somebody will.

Durbin said especially in the last section that includes the trends of all the cool things that we could do. We could spend 500 million dollars but we aren't going to.

Woeste said her plan is to remove "and provide funding" to the final, just keep it as it was.

Chapter 5: Systems Plan

Woeste said this was the goals and initiatives chapter. This was another chapter that was pretty well vetted. It was previously open to public comment and the park board saw this and gave feedback. There was appreciation for recognizing the challenge of off-leash dogs that has been a theme kind of throughout this whole process. We will talk a little more about that in chapter six. There was a request to be cautious when considering the addition for boardwalks. To consider more boardwalks and to do it cautiously if we make those decisions in the future is one thing staff can add to the systems. This would be an amenity and if it was added, it would go through a process.

Proposed Edits:

- Remove "explore options". Staff is going to keep that. As staff is looking at future projects to do, for example, when we build something like Ridgedale Commons or a new park or add amenities, staff wants to make sure that they are looking at ways to improve pedestrian safety. That is something we are doing already when constructing new trails. An example, Groveland Elementary is getting a pedestrian crossing when the trail gets added near there. That language was added because we know that we can't get to all 50 parks and improve all of the pedestrian crossings. It is really a goal to do it as we work towards future parks and amenities.

Chapter 6: Implementation

Woeste explained that this chapter had the facility guidelines table that we have already looked at. It has the priority initiatives and gives things a high, medium or low priority. In the feedback there were some specific trail segment requests. People were saying where they want to see trails and that is really a Trail Improvement Plan comment. However, these are comments that we can share internally with our trails team as we look at that plan. The Trail Improvement Plan doesn't have to be fixed, it can change overtime so there was some good feedback in there for some additional trail segments. Then in the

addendum today, there was a comment with the concern about the facility guideline table and preserves. A fear that if Purgatory Park is a community park that pickleball and active recreation could be put in there, however, it is a preserve as well. If there is a park that has the preserve classification, any activities that would go in there should fall under a passive type use. Then there is a theme again throughout this whole process of off-leash dogs with a lot of opinions on safety. Staff received some feedback today via email that is in the addendum regarding off-leash dogs. Woeste did correspond with those residents and let them know that this evening the park board was discussing a high-level plan; it was not focused on one particular park or one particular issue like off-leash dogs. She also explained that the outcome of this document does have some priorities and one of the priorities that we have in the initiatives is to study the feasibility of adding a dog park. Currently that is the only priority initiative listed around dogs. One question she has for the park board is if they feel that is sufficient as a priority initiative or if they feel like there should be further dog priorities other than studying the option to have a dog park in the future? She just wanted to get a little bit of feedback from the park board to see if there should be additional action taken regarding dogs in the future.

Durbin replied that the off-leash dog's topic has been brewing for like over 20 years in the city of Minnetonka. He almost thinks this topic is bigger than the park board. He is not opposed and he thinks doing a feasibility study for if they should put a dog park in and where is a great priority. He remembers when they did the park board tour a couple of years ago and they were in Opus, that was one suggestion made by the former city manager. He thinks putting something on the books and actually starting to tackle the problem is probably a wise decision, however, he thinks it has to be bigger than just the park board. He thinks it has different interest groups such as public safety and all sorts of concerns should be looked at as a whole to do it correctly. He personally thinks they should start addressing it.

Woeste commented that there was a conversation internally about this and they absolutely agreed that it is a very big picture item. If staff would put anything in here, they would need to have some discussions with the police department, planning department and public works director before they would say that they want to change the ordinance or something like that. Staff agrees but she just wanted to take the temperature of the park board and see if there was enough action items regarding dogs or if there was an opinion to put more in there.

Durbin thinks putting it in this plan is great but he thinks it also needs to move to the next step. He knows we are talking about this plan but he thinks this should actually be a significant goal and to start addressing it.

Gabler said you could almost put a small paragraph in an executive summary just stating that a discussion on a dog park is beyond the park board and would probably include the planning commission or anything with conditional use permits. That way people know the reason why it is not in there. Durbin is 100 percent right that it is way beyond the park board; it is probably going to bring three or four boards and commissions together to try and figure it out.

Ingraham has always been a dog owner and he thinks it has always been an issue but it is a much more significant issue today than it has been. Twenty years ago he spoke before the city council in support of off-leash dogs in Purgatory Park because back then the experience in Purgatory Park was a unique one for dog owners. One thing he thinks

is interesting in the received feedback is that there are a lot of dog owners that are upset and concerned about off-leash dogs because they've either personally been confronted by or their dogs have been attacked by and he thinks this is a big deal. To Durbin's point, it's potentially bigger than our organization because a big part of it is enforcement. He thinks Purgatory Park is kind of unique because it has a history now of having a large number of dogs and owners and to some extent Jidana Park also does. Ingraham can't remember if it was the park board or the Friends of Purgatory Park but during one of the last presentations he saw a pretty creative solution of having the northwest corner of Purgatory Park as a possible dog park location. It is now a heavily treed and buckthorn area, which would then relieve pressure on the prairie center. He thinks for a reference in this POST Plan and the Strategic Plan, addressing this issue is warranted because it's on a lot of things they have received. From his perspective, out of all the feedback they received, if you take out the passive versus active feedback, he thinks the feedback on dogs and safety was larger than he expected and more earnest. He thinks being responsive to the feedback and the residents is something they really need to look hard at.

Woeste thanked the board members for their input. She also mentioned that staff agrees that this is a really big picture issue. Staff will talk to some of our other leadership staff to see if and how we want to add some wording to this. Perhaps it is something high-level and one of the priorities is to start the conversation and work internally with public safety and other departments to address or begin to address the dog issue and come up with next steps. We'll talk internally about that and try to add some kind of language in there. She does think that the study and the feasibility of adding a dog park is still appropriate and is quite specific. It is a park board level decision but staff will come up with a way to figure out if we are going to add some text about discussions with other departments regarding the dog situation. She knows there is a desire and one of our high-priorities is master planning some parks. One of the high-level parks is Purgatory Park so she does believe that master planning Purgatory Park will come up during that process. There will also likely be some discussion around dogs and usage in that park through the process of master planning Purgatory Park in the near future.

Proposed Edits:

- Add an ongoing priority initiative to review trail and sidewalk winter maintenance priority designations as the trail and sidewalk system expands. There were several comments regarding snow removal on trails in the winter and some people want all of them done and all of them done fast. Street and Park Operations Manager, Darin Ellingson gave a presentation at one of the last park board meetings where you learned about that process and those decisions. We will just have to make sure we are reviewing the priorities as we build a lot more trails. This is saying more trails are coming over the next 10 years and we may have to look at those priorities and decide which trails are higher priority.

Appendix A

Woeste explained that this is the glossary. There were a few comments and a few minor changes.

Proposed Edits:

- Add natural areas to the definition of maintenance. The maintenance definition lists several things to maintain and we are going to add natural areas to that list.

- Add park classifications, such as the definitions of a mini park, neighborhood park, community park and a preserve. She thinks they will probably just put the park classifications in the glossary and say refer back to that table on that page. We will either do that or add all the definitions. The definitions are already in the document but we can at least call those out in the glossary and say to refer back to the table.
- Update the formal trail definition to include what a natural surface trail is (crushed limestone, compacted soil and mulch).

Durbin agrees with adding a glossary term to make the document more understandable.

Semersky thought the glossary looked good. She just wanted to take a second to recognize that Woeste really took all these comments very seriously, she could tell from the 13 pages of comments with responses to each. She appreciated her taking so much time to do that. Semersky wished they would've gotten more responses than just three to seven per section. That was a little disappointing but hopefully it's because you've given folks multiple opportunities to give input throughout the whole process. Great job really taking the comments seriously and responding to them.

Stroh asked if high and low quality parks are in the glossary. She felt like that was used a lot.

Woeste replied that it is not and that could likely be found in the Natural Resource Master Plan. That really talks about natural resources most likely in different areas. We don't have a definition for a high-quality park, we don't call any of our parks high-quality or low-quality. It might be an area of a park in the natural resources. There are a lot of maps showing that information in the Natural Resources Master Plan.

Ingraham said there were a lot of comments but not a lot of commenters. He asked what the unique views were on Minnetonka Matters. How many people looked at it?

Woeste replied that there were 260 unique views, let's try and take that as a positive. She doesn't know if we have ever done as much public engagement for other projects. People have had opportunities for the last six months or more to provide input. We heard it in our presentations from the Friends groups today; they were appreciative of the direction this was going in and thought it aligned with their goals as well. It was nice to hear that.

Durbin agreed with Woeste's assessment. He thinks this product is getting polished. It's getting to that point where they are only disagreeing over two words. That is fantastic.

Woeste appreciated all the help, guidance and feedback they have given.

Woeste explained that staff will be taking these edits and getting them implemented over the next month with a consultant. She will bring back the final plan to the park board for approval on April 6 and then it will go to council on April 25.

B. Adoption of 2022 Park Board Strategic Plan

O'Dea gave the report.

Ingraham asked what the funding special projects document is. He is in agreement with the plan but he wasn't sure what that was.

O'Dea said it is a document that we have, but it hasn't been used too much. An example is if we have somebody requesting to put in an amenity into a park system, such as platform tennis, or something they may not have heard of, there would probably be different reasons why they would say yes or no. We would want to work through that document and look at criteria and things like that as to why we would maybe accept or deny a potential project.

Walick moved, Ingraham seconded a motion to adopt the 2022 Park Board Strategic Plan as submitted. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

8. Park Board Member Reports

Durbin went to Jidana Park this weekend and accessed it via Jidana Road. It is such a cool park because it is completely different in the winter versus summer. He had an opportunity to walk on Minnehaha Creek. It is just a beautiful place to go and visit during the winter. His concern was that there was only one single trash can at the entrance and it was overflowing. It's a popular park and there were a lot of people there. He thinks people access it from different avenues so he was just hoping that we can keep the trash in the trash can. Maybe it needs to be emptied more frequently during this time of year. He just wants to keep the park looking nice right around that entrance.

Ingraham thought it was referenced at one of the POST TAC meetings that the dirt road around the southern edge of Cargill is actually on city property and is part of essentially Mooney Park. He was just curious if there has been any discussion internally with staff about what or how that might be used.

Ellingson said 99.5 percent of the trail is on city property. There are two segments that encroach on Cargill's property. We worked over the winter to get those areas surveyed and we are in the process of getting easements for those two portions so we can legally use all the trail. Last fall they started restoring the trail by grading it, cleaning it up, widening it and getting it ready for really active use by everybody. Also, they have identified the signs on city property that say "no trespassing" so they will be moving those and making some new ones to get them moved over closer to the Cargill property. They might not be right on the property line but they will be near the entrance points to the Cargill property just so people know to stay out of the Cargill area. We do have a little more work to do in a few areas, such as bringing in some new gravel where they had to remove weeds and overgrowth. There is a little bit of work to do but it should be open for everybody this spring and summer.

9. Information Items

Recreation Services 2022 Summer Brochure

O'Dea gave the report.

10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

He encouraged park board members to contact him if they had suggestions for stops on the park board tour.

11. Adjournment

Walick moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline

Kathy Kline
Recreation Administrative Coordinator