



**Minutes  
Minnetonka Park Board  
Wednesday, August 3, 2022**

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Roll Call**

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

Staff members in attendance: Darin Ellingson, Matt Kumka and Sara Woeste.

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

**3. Reports from Staff**

There were none.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Ingraham moved, Beyersdorf seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 1, 2022 as submitted. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

**5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda**

Assistant Recreation Director Sara Woeste noted that resident, Kristin Bilardi arrived at 5:30 p.m. to speak during this agenda item; not realizing the meeting began at 6:30 p.m. She will return to the September park board meeting to present the idea of adding a half-court basketball court at Ford Park.

**6. Special Matters**

There were none.

**7. Business Items**

**A. Land Donation Request – 11209 Timberline Road**

Street and Park Operations Manager Darin Ellingson gave the report. He introduced Ray Klemp, one of the members of the tennis association.

Ellie Peterson, 11309 Timberline Road, Minnetonka explained that their front yard borders the tennis court for approximately 13 feet. They have a lot of concerns about this proposed park. They have two young children so one would think they would be jumping at the chance for a playground. There are a couple of things she wanted to address before it is accepted and moved forward without really looking at this space. In full transparency, her and her husband put forth a proposal to purchase this land in April.

They got a couple of estimates on tearing down the tennis court to have a green space for their growing family to play. The court has been there for decades and nobody really uses it so that was the catalyst for the association meeting and bringing it to the city as a donation. Their main concern is safety because the streets are very narrow and windy around there. If there is one car parked on the street, it causes a really dangerous situation because bikers, pedestrians and other cars have to maneuver around it. There really isn't any parking and neighbors have found different ways over the years to combat that. Neighbors have allowed guests to park in their driveways and some have paved into their grass to create additional parking spaces for their guests. She walks daily and it troubles her to think about inviting a lot of cars into the neighborhood especially when they aren't used to driving there. There are no walking or biking paths and there is no way to enforce the fact that people should walk or bike there. She wasn't aware that the 2.2 miles were within the street borders of Cedar Lake Road and Hopkins Crossroad. Her family often walks to Ford Park which is less than a mile away; it just happens not to be within those borders that were mentioned but it is sufficient for them. While this sounds like a great idea in theory, she wanted to make sure they took a step back and thought about safety issues, additional traffic and people that they would be bringing into the neighborhood before going forward.

Gabler asked if there are any mini-parks in Minnetonka without a small parking lot.

Ellingson replied that Oakhaven Park is a mini-park and there is one handicap parking stall there. Sunrise and Mini-Tonka parks both have two parking stalls and a handicap stall.

Gabler asked if our parks would need to have at least a handicap parking stall for ADA.

Ellingson responded that staff would recommend having one handicap stall so they could be off-street. Staff observes that most people walk or bike to mini-parks.

Gabler asked if staff envisioned putting a parking spot near the bottom right side of the diagram.

Ellingson replied that it is too early to tell. He wasn't sure what the grades are on that side of the property; there are also trees to try and avoid removing. They could also look into posting no parking signs around the park if it gets to that point.

Gabler mentioned that he has driven a school bus there and it is really tight, especially if there is a car. It seems like there is always a car parked in the absolute worst spot.

Stroh asked how many parking spots could fit there with enough room for a playground.

Ellie Peterson wasn't sure because it's a really small space and playgrounds can vary in size. She also doesn't want to look at a parking lot and feels although it's not necessary to have one. It is a small area and they don't need additional people driving into the neighborhood. Parking is a concern but people zip around the corner and if they aren't from the area, the less they care about the area and how fast they drive. It is really about the safety of the kids who live around the area and not inviting additional cars.

Beyersdorf asked if anything else could be done with the property besides a playground.

Ellingson didn't think the city would have any other use for it. Around 2008, the city was contacted about it being used for other things such as a storm sewer. At that time nobody suggested a playground so the city declined the offer. They declined the offer based on what the proposed uses were.

Beyersdorf asked if there was a difference between a playground and a green space.

Ellingson said yes and that a green space could be considered.

Ellie Peterson said she has talked to neighbors with children and a green space would be much more acceptable because it is less of a draw. People probably aren't going to drive to sit on a green space but the community could still gather there.

Ingraham asked if it would become an outlet.

Ellingson replied that it wouldn't technically be an outlet; it would just be a vacant lot. The city owns three or four vacant lots that were never acquired for any particular purpose. These lots are green spaces that staff mows and they are kind of used in a similar way.

Beyersdorf questioned what would happen to the property if the city didn't build a playground on it.

Ellingson didn't know if it would be desirable to own the property if they weren't going to build a park on it. It could be considered to have a green space.

Ingraham asked if the motivation of the association is to transfer it to the city.

Ray Klempp, 1829 Timberline Trail, Minnetonka said that the association decided they didn't want to use it anymore as a tennis court. After many discussions it was narrowed down to two options. One option was to sell the property, which was stimulated by them wanting to make a playground out of it. The alternative was contributing it to the city and having it become a neighborhood park. It is their belief and wish for that area to end up as a no parking zone, even if nothing goes forward. As Peterson said, if anyone parks there, they are asking for a problem. He also walks every day and thinks that area is dangerous. Gabler mentioned driving a school bus and the school bus drivers sometimes have a tough time getting around there. If it is a neighborhood park, he envisions a no parking zone because that would encourage people to bike or walk there. They don't want to encourage people to drive from other places. He thinks it is an asset to the community and the houses that are around it. The association voted to do one of the two options and Klempp is pursuing the option to contribute it to the city and someone else is pursuing the selling option. Based off if the city wants it or if there is a buyer, they will have a formal meeting and select what they want to do with it. It wasn't their intention to demolish everything and make it a green space.

Jacobs asked if a stipulation in the donation would be to have a community park, not just a green space.

Klempp said the stipulation would be the non-street parking and having a maximum of one handicap parking spot. They don't want a parking lot that can hold three or four cars because people can walk or bike there.

Durbin is familiar with the size of Mini-Tonka Park and he doesn't think people would drive to a park of that size. There isn't a draw and those parks are made for people who are in that immediate vicinity to use. Part of this is the design of the park, it could just be a swing set and a half-basketball court. Those would be things that can be considered and tailored to this park. He questioned if there is a desire from the neighborhood for a park. A little park like this really adds value to the neighborhood because people can just walk across the street to use it instead of driving somewhere. Sunrise Park is near the Williston Fitness Center and nobody drives to that park. Durbin wondered if the city could widen the street on that bend if they owned both this parcel and the right-of-way. He envisions a very simple park with just the basics for the kids in the neighborhood to walk or bike to.

Gabler said when he heard the comment about a basketball court, he was thinking that there already is a leveled hard surface there.

Klemp commented that the surface won't remain a viable alternative. The tennis court already has cracks in it and it would become a liability.

Jacobs asked if staff ever does surveys on how many people drive to those small parks.

Ellingson answered no.

Beyersdorf asked if there are any issues with people driving to a park that doesn't really have parking.

Ellingson replied that they don't get complaints. As he visits parks such as Oakhaven Park, he doesn't see parked cars when people are there. Not to say it never happens but it's rare.

Ingraham thought that if you have a park, there should be at least a few parking spots. He drives by Mini-Tonka about two to three times a day and there usually is a car parked by the water tower while kids are playing. That park benefits from having sidewalks so in terms of access for people with strollers, its comfort to get to the local park. As this park is being described, it sounds more problematic. This is about 60 percent the size of Mini-Tonka Park, but he wasn't sure how much footprint is under the water tower.

Ellingson said Mini-Tonka Park is a .57 acre parcel but about half of that is taken up by the water tower. The useable space at Mini-Tonka would be smaller than this.

Ingraham verified that this would be bigger than Mini-Tonka.

Ellingson said that was correct. Even though the space is bigger than Mini-Tonka, it would still be a very small park with green space. If this moves forward, there would be neighborhood meetings to see what kind of amenities are desired. He envisions a 2-5 years old play equipment, a 5-12 years old play equipment and maybe some things to clime or crawl on. A basketball court never entered his mind because they are trying to keep it a quieter park. With a basketball court, you could get a group of people playing and they don't really want that. People could go to Mayflower or Ford parks for that kind of activity.

Ingraham asked if they are creating a risk by putting a park there without good site lines, no sidewalks and questionable driving especially with kids trying to walk or bike there. Some sort of traffic signage or something would be needed if a park was there.

Stroh asked if it would help mitigate part of the risk if a fence with a gate would be put up around where the road is, and no parking signs were placed by the road.

Gabler questioned if he would want to look out his front door and see fences with no parking signs in an area that currently doesn't have them.

Ellingson said we would probably look towards more nature screening versus fencing. That is where they would plant a hedge, arbor vitas, or some kind of barrier with consideration of the neighbors. Fencing is an option but it isn't their first choice. They usually try to go towards a more natural type of screening.

Durbin thought Ingraham had a good point about walking to the park. He also agreed with Ellingson about having at least one ADA or regular parking spot even in a no parking type of area. It is best to accommodate the unknown. He recommended not putting a pickleball court here if they want to keep this neighborhood quiet. Durbin is torn on if anyone really wants this. He wouldn't want to move very fast on this or make the commitment in doing this until he knew that.

Stroh has realized that sometimes people use old tennis courts for things other than tennis. An example is letting their dog run or play catch because it is a hard, open space. She wasn't sure of the condition of the court being discussed but thought if it isn't in good condition, people might still be currently using it for other things.

Ellingson said the tennis court is pretty much past its useful life. If we were to own it, we would remove the court and the fencing.

Durbin asked Park and Trail Project Manager Matt Kumka what his thoughts were on this.

Kumka said he just came from a Hopkins Crossroad trails meeting. There is going to be a trail on the east side of Hopkins Crossroad as early as 2024 that would potentially improve the walkability. Beyond the park and trail influence, the overall availability of a pocket park is for the local neighbors. It wouldn't be a draw, but there would be increased availability from the trail on Hopkins Crossroad that gets constructed.

Ellingson said an option that could be considered is to have a neighborhood meeting and possibly invite the whole northern part of this park service area and get feedback. That might help with the decision making on committing ahead of getting the land. The park board could also potentially accept it contingent on approval of the neighborhood, however, that kind of puts the existing owners in limbo.

Jacobs commented that there were two options. He questioned if the city wanted the land, would they gain the land or would the association still convene and decide what to do with it.

Klempf replied that out of the two options, the city option was decided as the most preferred, however, that was not everyone's preference.

Jacobs said that was his concern. He thought they should do more outreach before they move it to the city council because they may find out that nobody wants a park. Also, the association may want to go in a different direction.

Gabler added that there are concerns with traffic and parking. He thought it would be great to have a piece of land but not if there isn't anything to do with it. He suggested tabling this until they have some outreach unless the association is in a hurry. If they are in a hurry and they sell it, then they sell it. He knows the area and you don't want kids running across the street there.

Jacobs said in an ideal world it would be great to have a park there. There could be a no parking area and they could put in slow traffic signs or speed bumps. He just wants to make sure that somebody wants it first.

Durbin liked the idea of working with the residents. He is all for investigating and seeing what happens; maybe there will be a clear answer after a little bit of outreach. Then some of those questions could be addressed.

Gabler explained that their action would be to entertain a motion on what they want to do. They could accept staff's recommendation and move it onto city council, however, he doesn't think they are there yet. Second, they could vote to take it back to the neighbors and let them discuss it and maybe have a meeting.

Durbin moved, Jacobs seconded a motion not to accept this because they want staff to do more research with the neighborhood. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

B. Memorandum of Understanding – Friends of Cullen Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary

Kumka gave the report.

Jerrold Gershone, 13111 April Lane, Minnetonka is the president of the Friends of Cullen Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary. They fully support this and they were part of a negotiation with Natural Resources Manager Leslie Yetka and Kumka. As Kumka said, they have been working very well together; moving forward this will clarify and streamline things. Gershone announced that the Friends of Cullen Nature Preserve are having an event on September 9 at The Marsh. They will be giving updates on the preserve and they will have three elected officials that will be making comments at the state, county and city level. All of those making comments are their three sources of funding for the restoration. Professor Lee Frelich, head of the Center for Forest Ecology at the University of Minnesota will be speaking on oak ecosystems. There will be food, live music and a silent auction. It would be great to have some or all of the park board members there. More information about the event is posted on [cullennature.org](http://cullennature.org). The city manager has agreed to use city channels to help them publicize this event.

Ingraham was concerned with the Open Meeting Law if all of the park board members attended the event.

Woeste explained that you can show up to the event but you can't talk business.

Gershone replied that they checked with City Manager Mike Funk. He said because it was a community event, it should be fine as long as you aren't talking city business.

Durbin suggested coordinating with Recreation Director Kelly O'Dea.

Kumka added that the recommended action is to approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Minnetonka and the Friends of Cullen Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary to the city council.

Durbin asked what would happen if they don't approve the MOU.

Kumka said the formality of this understanding presents itself to the collaborative spirit that they are trying to foster with groups and city staff. He thought it was worth noting that the Cullen Nature Preserve is a parcel within Minnetonka; it's not like our other parks where there are a lot of potentially pressing interests. The Cullen Nature Preserve will always be just that, it is under a conservation easement with the Minnesota Land Trust. Ultimately this site would be restored as an oak savanna woodland and birds would return.

Gabler liked the MOU because it spelled out what everybody is supposed to do.

Gershone said if the players change then they have a guideline to go by.

Ingraham thought it was very well done and that it was appropriate given the underlying Land Trust. It would be really easy to somehow unintentionally encumber that and having this structure helps everyone. It makes it formal so that doesn't happen.

Kumka said it would be a yearly automatically renewed understanding.

Gabler liked it too because then they aren't setting up future boards or future Friends organizations.

Jacobs added that it is looking great out there. It has come a long way in the past two or three years.

Jacobs moved, Durbin seconded a motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the city and Friends of Cullen Nature Preserve to the city council.  
All voted "yes." Motion carried.

## **8. Park Board Member Reports**

There were none.

## **9. Information Items**

### **Summer Fest**

Woeste gave the report.

### **Pickleball Court Requests**

Kumka gave the report.

Durbin noted that the pickleball courts are very popular. His only concern with pickleball is that the courts at Lone Lake Park were really expensive. That was several years ago so the price is probably double now; he suggests trying to get the cost down.

Kumka replied that part of the ranking prioritization would include those costs. There is some talk about the potential for allocating tennis courts for pickleball courts.

Stroh asked how much it was to make the pickleball courts at Lone Lake Park.

Ellingson responded it was \$410,000 to build the eight courts.

Stroh asked if there are any tennis courts in particular or in any general areas that staff were thinking of. Williston Tennis Manager Felicia Raschiatore had tennis coaches' survey different courts during COVID and she thought they had a bunch.

Kumka said they just began early conversations but GroTonka comes to mind. There are great tennis courts there and staff would be interested in looking into that location.

Ellingson said that Oberlin and Linner parks have tennis courts. They would primarily be looking at converting an existing tennis court or courts to pickleball versus making unused space a court.

Ingraham asked if one tennis court could become two pickleball courts.

Ellingson replied that two pickleball courts could fit on a tennis court but you lose the run-off space. The pickleball courts at Lone Lake Park have the desired space beyond the front and the back of the courts. If you put two courts on one tennis court, you won't have as much room from the end line to the fence or on the sides.

Stroh asked how many pickleball courts would be needed to make the project worth it.

Kumka responded that it is a popular sport. The amount of courts being utilized at Lone Lake Park at all hours is pretty high. He thought the expectation was to look into doing as many as they could fully do.

Ingraham asked if anybody is working on a quiet pickleball.

Woeste answered that she doesn't know of any yet, however, she thought they may have some paddles that are quieter.

Durbin added that this pickleball phenomom is interesting because it is kind of a movement now. Maybe tennis is fading and it would be nice if we could use city resources for pickleball. Then if pickleball dies in 10-15 years, there are tennis courts or something for the next game that happens.

### **Park Board Member Sign-Up for Monthly Habitat Stewardship Meetings**

Kumka gave the report.



Gabler commented that the next park board meeting is the Wednesday before the Friends walk. He asked if they could get an answer regarding the Open Meeting Law at that meeting.

Woeste believes they are fine if the city manager gave the ok. City councilmembers have attended events such as grand openings and there are events where all boards and commissions are invited. As long as you are not talking business, you should be alright.

## **10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items**

Woeste gave the report.

Ingraham wanted to bring up the dog leash issues under the items to be scheduled. In the POST Plan survey, he remembers the largest single concern expressed by residents was safety regarding dogs, whether they were leashed or unleashed. This has been a concern for a long time and he is curious on how to address it. He wondered if since the park board is closest to the POST Plan results that they can somehow be a catalyst to get the ball rolling. They could at least try and figure out who it gets addressed to and how they address it. Our ordinance is terrible and the wording is so vague. Ordinances from neighboring communities are pretty straight forward and ours is not. He asked if that is something that they can touch on at the October park board meeting and maybe add as an item to the joint meeting with city council in November. It's not really a park board thing alone but they should at least try and raise the issue that their residents have told them. They have heard a lot about restoration and the concern is high, but more people are concerned about safety. He thinks about a quarter of all the respondents felt unsafe in the parks because of dogs and that is a big number to him.

Woeste said the question is where they should start in the city as far as what the process would be for making changes with public safety. She will note that it was emphasized and staff can get it on a future agenda.

Gabler thought that would be a good item for the joint meeting with city council.

Durbin agreed with Gabler and Ingraham.

Kumka reminded the board that master planning for Purgatory Park is going to occur. The dog issue directly relates to the restoration there so it will come up in that master planning process.

Ingraham wanted to be clear that his issue is the ordinance, which, involves walking your dog in a neighborhood. According to our ordinance right now, he doesn't need to have his dog on a leash while walking through a neighborhood as long as it is on voice command. Everyone thinks their dog is on voice command but most of them aren't.

Durbin said there is a time in early January or February where they review proposed changes to ordinances. It seems like if they have the conversation now, then maybe something can develop by the time it comes around to review.

## **11. Adjournment**

Ingraham made a motion, Jacobs seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kathy Kline*

Kathy Kline  
Recreation Administrative Coordinator