



**Minutes
Minnetonka Park Board
Wednesday, September 7, 2022**

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

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

Staff members in attendance: Matt Kumka, Kelly O’Dea, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka.

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

3. Reports from Staff

Recreation Director Kelly O’Dea reminded park board members to have their audio devices close to them.

4. Approval of Minutes

Jacobs moved, Beyersdorf seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of Aug. 3, 2022 as submitted. All voted “yes.” Motion carried.

5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

This was discussed after Business Item 7A. Else Goll, a math teacher at Minnetonka Middle School East who has previously addressed the board with her skateboarders, addressed the board with the following comments. Goll stated that it was the second day of school and it was hard to get a crew of them here so she is speaking on their behalf. Goll founded the Minnesota Skateboard League and has been running it for five years. There are consistently 50-70 skaters at just one middle school and it is the biggest club; it rivals larger sports that are more mainstream. The kind of students that join are everyone from a typical kid who loves sports to maybe a student that is neurodivergent and doesn’t participate in team sports. There is a well-rounded group of kids so she wants to make sure all of them are seen in all of this. On the first day of school students that weren’t even in her class came to ask her what the progress is on the skate park. They are very excited and she was pleased to tell them that the city is moving forward and looking at feasibility to see if they can make this happen. However, telling them that potential groundbreaking could be years from now, to a 12 or 14 year old, it seems like a lifetime. She requested that the board consider doing a stop-gap measure of a less expensive Skatelite half-pipe ramp on the existing Glen Lake site. The blacktop is a mess, the obstacles are not rideable and the obstacles aren’t ones that skateboarders want to ride because of the way they are constructed, the materials used and the layout. Rather than maintaining and repairing items, she asked if they could go a different direction that is not super expensive. It would get them through the next two years and kids could start using it immediately. A Skatelite 20 foot half-pipe is more reasonably priced, the materials are readily available, they are durable and it’s not a temporary item. It

is something that could be there for decades if it is properly maintained and repaired as needed. It might be a nice compliment if you are still thinking of the Glen Lake site where the playground is. You could keep the half-pipe there and maybe consider a bowl park and then have some street course elements. You could have all three types of parks in one location. If you don't know about skateboarding, there are many different ways that you can compete. There could be three representations there or another option would be to have two representations if you had a half-pipe and a bowl transition park. Goll reminded everyone that they are the only school sanctioned skateboard league that they are aware of in the state of Minnesota and they are one of the few cities in the Twin Cities that doesn't have a skate park. They are kind of paving the way because she is being asked by people to come into school districts and help them start skate parks. They are being used as an example on what to do for youth and reaching out to find out what they are interested in. Skateboarding is an Olympic sport now and it's not going anywhere; it is only growing. She and the kids are both excited to work with everyone.

O'Dea said this is kind of like what they were talking about in Business Item 7A.

Gabler reminded everyone that the first time this was brought up, there were a bunch of kids who spoke at the meeting and they supported the skate park. It is good when kids get involved. He said that he is around Round Lake Park in Eden Prairie all the time and it is always busy.

Goll said it is busy all the time.

Gabler added that people usually clean up after themselves; it is always pretty clean there.

Durbin questioned if Goll knew the demand at Minnetonka Middle School West or at the Hopkins schools. He mentioned that she just has a small sliver of kids that are bugging her. He also questioned if this is more of a maintenance request for Street and Park Operations Manager Darin Ellingson. It seems like this would be similar to replacing playground equipment.

O'Dea thought that was kind of right. Goll was correct that the earliest something would be done with a new skate park would be 2024. Staff is looking at feasibility and some design in 2023 or potentially in 2024. Staff was interested to know why the current skate park wasn't being used much.

Goll said she could bring in kids to explain that to you.

O'Dea replied that staff has gotten feedback on why it's not being used as much. He said the questions are:

- What type of equipment?
- How much does it cost?
- What does staff need to budget for?
- Is this an operational item that staff can try and get into the 2023 budget?
- Is the park board supportive of staff looking into putting some dollars into a facility knowing that it potentially is going to be upgraded in a couple years?

Durbin questioned if Glen Lake was being considered as a possible site for the final skate park. If not, it would be sad to put something new there if it couldn't be dismantled and put

into the new space. He would hate to build something just to have it there for a few years. He also understands that you don't have a location and it is something that would take time. We've gotten a lot of feedback that the Glen Lake area is not a great place to have a skate park.

Jacobs asked if that is the location we are looking at. Would this be a band aid or would this be in addition to something? Would this equipment stay there for people to use?

Beyersdorf wondered if we build a new skate park, would the old one be demolished or would it stay there.

Park and Trail Project Manager Matt Kumka said they are looking at that area but it was quickly determined that the existing footprint is too small. They are looking at, for instance, there is a playground on the other side of the dog groomer's site and they have looked at that parcel being more significantly sized. Then looking at what would the potential be for relocating the playground down to the existing skate park area. He thought the goal with putting in a ramp was that it would be moveable to potentially another location. They are hearing from their skate park feasibility consultant that there is an option for one large significant regional park but then there could be another smaller site somewhere in the city. For the ramp, the options would exist for it to be relocated to another location somewhere in the city.

Ingraham asked if the current equipment at Glen Lake is safe.

Kumka responded that feedback is saying that it is not safe.

Ingraham said that we could take out the existing equipment and do nothing with it or they could do this idea.

Kumka replied that some of those obstacles are quite outdated. The preferred option would be to put in a half-pipe on that site. It would be a unique feature for this area and it's endlessly skateable. This is what the kids are asking for essentially. Staff spoke to a ramp builder when they were pursuing this idea and they said that half-pipes get a ton of use. It would be plopped down on that site and could be ready to skate on in a relatively short order. However, the other stuff would have to get out of the way.

Goll said you wouldn't have to resurface it. The half-pipe would just go on top and it would save you money.

O'Dea agreed with Ingraham that there is a difference between something that's not safe and something that is just not fun.

Ingraham said he worries about the safety. A new mural is going in at that location on Saturday so we are investing in that location.

O'Dea thought it got pushed back a week but a new mural is going in.

Durbin questioned if this was a park board matter or if it is something for Ellingson. When playground equipment gets changed out, staff just informs the park board about it.

O'Dea explained that Ellingson has a replacement schedule for playground equipment in our park system.

Ingraham commented that the replacement schedule doesn't fit this.

O'Dea said there is a safety issue that they have to address sooner than they may have thought in the past. With some of our play equipment, there could be swings out there that are safe but not fun anymore; that doesn't mean they are going to replace them. If there are safety issues, than yes, something needs to be done. If funding wasn't budgeted or available, the easiest thing to do would be remove it and not put anything in. First, they need to make sure the equipment is safe. Secondly, they need to look at funding. He thinks some of the options that they looked at were large enough where they didn't have that sitting in our current operation budget.

Durbin asked if there is a mechanism to get that.

O'Dea said potentially. Staff is working on our operations budget for 2023. Our Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is already set and will be approved at one of the next council meetings. He thinks staff could look into getting something into their operational budget for 2023. That would be the most reasonable way to do something if the park board is supportive of doing that.

Gabler thought the biggest selling point is the fact it is a safety issue. The city is liable if it's not safe.

O'Dea wasn't sure if an independent consultant has come out yet to say it is not safe. Staff would have to verify the safety issue, but he agrees that we don't want unsafe equipment in our park system.

Semersky noted that we are talking about the skate park feasibility in November and asked if a good next step would be to include that idea as part of that. Another option would be to evaluate it as part of the overall feasibility since it is around the corner.

Kumka responded that would make sense because what he is describing is more of a regional, permanent thing. This is a potential add-on and would be moved in the future. That is all going to be discussed in the feasibility study.

Durbin suggested keeping them separate. If there is a maintenance and safety issue, it could go through a different pathway because it doesn't need the park board. He recommended having Ellingson find some money, if the city thinks this needs to be done.

Ingraham said this goes into that democracy part.

Durbin added that when Ellingson changes out playground equipment, he doesn't consult with the park board about which brand to buy. To him, this is similar to an unsafe swing set.

O'Dea suggested having him and Kumka discuss this with Ellingson and Public Works Director Will Manchester to see how they can handle this and give them an update in November. He thinks there is a demand for newer and updated features so they'll work with Ellingson and Manchester to find a remedy.

6. Special Matters

There were none.

7. Business Items

A. Guidelines for Evaluating Resident Requests for Special Projects.

O'Dea gave the report.

Ingraham liked the focus on the formatting and checklist and he is supportive of the questions identified. He added that the skate park wouldn't have passed this because there wasn't a specific site. They couldn't have answered if the city owns it or if it was accessible because they didn't know the site. He wondered what they would do with something like that because it is a good project that they have been evaluating. At first he thought the form would work really well but then he thought about the skate park. What would happen if someone came in with an idea but they didn't know where it might go but you thought it would be worth looking into?

O'Dea thought that was a good point. He agreed that the skate park is a good potential project that they should be evaluating. Maybe they could change some of the questions or maybe they don't need as many yes'.

Beyersdorf questioned if it could be more of a sliding scale such as ranking them from one to five; one being it isn't feasible and five being it is. In the proposed way, if you have too many no's the project is done. The sliding scale would give it a little more wiggle room in how you are deciding everything.

Durbin thought there should be something to the extent that Beyersdorf proposed or maybe someone has to have five or more yes'. Then at the bottom, there could be an area to agree if they think it is a good idea to investigate anyway. They should be able to research or investigate items that don't meet the criteria. He really liked that number one and two are solids but the other ones are kind of softer. For number three, sometimes they might not know if there is enough support until there is outreach. Showing support is sometimes in that next step when they want staff to do outreach.

O'Dea replied that staff struggled with that one too. They may get one request from one resident over three years and that doesn't show a demand to them. Then you get a group of people who want a mountain bike trail or a skate park and there is a large group and some even provide a petition.

Natural Resources Manager Leslie Yetka said this is meant to be a tool so there could be questions that fall under the unknown category, a good example of that is the skate park. Answering yes and no gives staff information in order to decide on what their next steps would be. If there are a lot of unknowns, then they really don't know enough information.

Semersky commented that it would help her talk to residents. She could tell them that there are two unknowns and ask them to learn more about those before they can investigate further.

Durbin added that part of the next steps could be to figure out what the unknowns are and see if they can come up with yes' or no's. They don't have to toss it in the trash because it doesn't meet them at that moment. He likes the ambiguity and that it isn't all yes's or no's. He appreciated the fact that there is some criteria and a form to have some standardization. The most important step is to have a historical document indicating the request and how it was rated.

Gabler liked one and two but recommended turning numbers three through 10 into more of a request for proposal (RFP). Then if somebody wants to come to the park board with a proposal, they can write it based on these items, rather than checking off yes or no. Let the petitioners come in and fill it out and see if it meets the criteria for numbers one and two.

Beyersdorf added that if you give them the criteria then there won't be unknowns. That is because they would be able to answer those questions before it reaches the park board.

Ingraham said the most important criteria on numbers three through 10 is number three. Number three is their interest and it shows how much interest. The other ones are more the tactics around it. He goes back to the skate park and how it would be really good to have one. Then you start asking where it will be located and if there is funding for it. They aren't going to know those answers but if you have a lot of people say they want it; they will probably work pretty hard to go through the steps.

Jacobs liked it as a tool. The first two are good and he kind of broke it into three sections. First, you find out if it passes the first two criteria. Second, he broke it down into a demand part that is going to require outreach and feasibility. Third, you come back and answer the other questions about location, funding, etc. He also mentioned that the project they were evaluating at the last meeting would've had enough yes' to go through, however, they wouldn't have answered number three. That is where they would've stopped.

Ingraham wanted to verify it was regarding the neighborhood park.

Jacobs said yes. There was demand for the neighborhood park so they would've stopped at number three. They could go through and say yes or no to the rest of them but it doesn't really matter because they were still at number three. So break it into three parts and then decide what it would do to that community. Maybe make a section that says that there is demand and it will not change the area, then move onto the next part.

Gabler added that he would like to see if there is an opportunity for public/private partnership. If a project comes in that people are behind and there is public/private partnerships, it is an easier sell to the park board and council.

Durbin doesn't think this needs to be on the form but what if the park board requests that anything moving forward needs the park board support. There could be somebody that comes up with a plan and they meet all this criteria, however, the park board doesn't want to do it. For example, someone wants to put in a rocket ship pad for drones and they get all the yes' but the park board doesn't want to do that and they don't want to recommend it to the city council. There has to be something that says the park board doesn't have to do the project even if it meets all the criteria. He is pretty happy with the form and thought Jacobs' point was correct.

Ingraham said most examples are facility based projects. He asked if it was possible for a program or activity to fit this. An example would be a farmer's market.

O'Dea replied that typically when there is a program request, it comes through our department. Then staff evaluates the need for it and they have certain criteria for that.

Yetka added that she would say the same about a program. This is more project based in terms of something being built or infrastructure related. A good example would be the park board saw the proposal for the habitat restoration in a park. If you recall it was the pollinator planting, which was actually a change in land use. It was removing turf and converting it to a natural area. That is why there was a question about land use.

Gabler thought that if someone has an idea for a park or something, they will take care of number three if they are passionate about it. Bring the park board the support rather than them trying to find the support. Then it is effective and you this is a passionate group that you can have a conversation with.

Jacobs commented that last month's group regarding building a park didn't even have a clear answer on if it was going to happen.

Durbin added that they could've brought more people and thought that they probably wanted to make sure that all voices were heard. Come out with at least an initial bang and have like 100 people say that you want something or at least a lot more than just one.

Gabler said that is what pickleball and mountain bike people did and they came in force.

Durbin appreciated that this would also work for nature conservation. He was wondering if Lone Lake Park would fit into that because it was a big deal. That was money spent and it changed the shape of a park. We are going to get other things like that.

Beyersdorf asked how they would judge what significant demand or support is on number three. Is it the number of people or a percentage? She questioned if criteria needs to be put in place so they can decide if it reaches that criteria for them to move on.

Semersky said it would depend on the project scope because they would have to decide by project how much significance it would be.

O'Dea gave the example of the request they heard last week. There were eight neighbors and let's say six of the neighbors said they wanted it. Would you say that is support or would you say at least 50 percent is support? He wasn't sure what the answer to that question would be. He thought the neighborhood requests are different than the community level requests though.

Woeste asked if it would be helpful to remove the word significant. It is hard to answer what significant is.

Jacobs thought it leaves some ambiguity. If it is five to four, it doesn't mean they are definitely going to do it.

Beyersdorf thinks regardless if you have the word in there or not, the meaning is the same. Whether it is significant demand or demand in general, what is the demand?

Durbin thought it also depended on who is filling out the form. He thinks you could get three different answers if staff, the applicant or the park board fills it out. Obviously they want to work with the staff and help get these answers and get their expertise on whether or not this is significant. Maybe this is soft enough and they put it as a next step. If they aren't sure, they ask them to investigate more. It's not like they have to pass it and fund it in one night. They can keep it moving and investigate it some more.

Gabler would change the wording of number three from "is there significant demand" to "how much demand or support is there."

Beyersdorf added that for the first three questions, they need to have a yes for them. However, for number three, the people who are coming in should know how much support they are supposed to have when they show up. It's not fair for them to do all the leg work and show up thinking they have enough support, then finding out that they don't have enough support when they get there.

O'Dea agreed that it is challenging. He could see someone coming in saying they want more pickleball courts and their support is that they are at Lone Lake Park and the courts are full every morning. Does that show enough demand to build more courts?

Beyersdorf asked if they are telling people they need to do a petition or a neighborhood survey. What are they supposed to do to get that information to us?

Jacobs questioned the neighborhood park that was proposed the previous month. Would you just go to the neighborhood and knock on doors?

O'Dea thought that one was a little different. We aren't sure whether or not they wanted to donate the land, but we thought we knew.

Ingraham agreed and thought that even if the city wanted it, they still might've changed their mind.

O'Dea said it seemed like they weren't all on the same page and staff didn't know that. If we had a request from a neighborhood, he thinks they would like to see a majority of the people in support of a project. He doesn't know if he can tie a percentage to that but it might be tough if it is 50/50.

Jacobs wondered for a bigger project like mountain bike trails, would you just tell them to put their word on it; presuming they would spread the word and people who want mountain bike trails would weigh in. They could also get a petition to sign or staff could do an online survey as well.

O'Dea agreed that staff can do some of the leg work.

Durbin said the mountain biking proposal was large and there was so much feedback. There is no way staff had the time to count how many people were for and against it. The park board and the city also has the right to make decisions in the public's interest even if there isn't that support. The city has that where not everything that they do is a

democracy. If they think it is a good enough idea to pursue based on some criteria, then they should go for it knowing that it will get passed to others that will make the final decision.

Woeste commented that this is really to tell staff that you should study the feasibility. The park board would essentially approve the project at a later time. This is saying that it is worth studying and putting time into.

Durbin thought it was better to give some soft yes' as long as they think they might actually pass it down the road.

O'Dea agreed with Durbin's earlier comment that a rocket ship pad is probably something they don't want to do research on because they don't feel like that is appropriate. To make sure they weed out some of those requests, staff can hold onto them and let the person know that they are the first person to request it. Then they can hold onto it and if they hear from more people, they can address it later.

Gabler thought a way to save your time is to have them show you the support, rather than us trying to figure out if it is a good project. If it is a good project, they will bring support with them.

Jacobs commented that it wouldn't be telling someone to get a petition with a certain amount of signatures. He wouldn't put a number on it but he would let them know if it is on the agenda, they should show up if they want it.

Beyersdorf said this is for a resident request so if they are coming to us, they should've already done the legwork. They should give us as much information as possible so we can make a decision.

Jacobs said however they want to do that is however they want to do that.

Gabler said that would also value staff time. Staff is a city asset and we have to value their time. We can't have them chasing around getting everything.

Jacobs said that is what he was trying to get at.

Durbin also thinks the relationship between staff and the park board is imperative. He requested that O'Dea doesn't bring a rocket ship pad to their attention. O'Dea can file the request and he will know the priority of it. Unless the board says that they want something on the agenda, staff kind of leads the way or guides them.

O'Dea added that people can bring it to us but we would likely say that we don't see it as a good use of our park system. They are more than welcome to go to the park board but it's likely that you probably won't support it.

Durbin said the park board usually agrees with staff recommendations.

Yetka wanted to reiterate, that there is some advantage to having question number three vague because it forces staff or the park board to wonder what kind of support there is and maybe they would have to do more homework. Having that ambiguity and flexibility can be helpful because it forces them to look more critically at it.

Gabler said that was an excellent point and that is why he would take the word significant out.

Jacobs said generally when people go to them, it seems like they have thought it out.

Durbin said they are passionate for sure.

Beyersdorf mentioned that the word significant doesn't always have a number meaning; it could also mean that it is significant to them. The demand is that it means something to them.

O'Dea said he is kind of hearing that if a resident had a request, staff would talk to them before the meeting and tell them to come prepared to show us numbers one, two and three. Then the park board will say it aligns with the Parks, Open Space and Trails (POST) Plan, it aligns with the Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP), and there is demand. Then the park board can ask a few more questions to see if staff should continue studying it.

Gabler thought staff could say it sounds like a great request and tell them they will send them something to fill out. They can either send it back to staff or bring it to the meeting.

Ingraham thought a lot of people might know the site when they are making a request. He brought up the skate park only because it is potentially a big idea, however, they don't necessarily have to know where to put it. He assumed if someone requested adding a playground feature to an existing playground, they would know the neighborhood. For the skate park, they showed a lot of passion and skate parks are very popular in the Twin Cities. Minnetonka doesn't have one that is of commensurate appeal so it's probably worth looking at. For a lot of the bigger items, people might not know the answers to numbers four through 10. They could probably sense if it is something they should seriously be looking at though.

O'Dea asked if they are missing anything from numbers four through 10. They talked about public/private partnerships but he was curious if there are any other criteria that they want to dig into further or send to staff to evaluate more.

Gabler liked what they have because it keeps it simple. They don't want to get into paralysis by analysis.

Jacobs thought it was simple. Even if they say yes on every one, it's a process and it doesn't mean that it is happening.

Durbin added that for the funding that is currently available, it's either going to be the CIP or it is something they are working on like trying to get a grant. He's not sure if that has to be on this form though. He liked the way the form is and thought that number three is really important. He also liked the fact that they are going to make the applicants read and figure things out because that is going to weed out a lot of items. If they are going to put the burden on the applicant, staff would help them if they didn't know. Have the applicants look at the documents that guide what the park board does. If they want something in our park system, see if it aligns.

Semersky added that there is a summary at the top of the page that includes examples of projects. If you want natural resources to be part of it, maybe include one or two examples of natural resources projects.

O'Dea said staff will edit this and bring it back to see what the park board thinks. They are going to get requests and it would be nice to have the applicant look at documents from the past year and a half so they can get familiar with them.

Gabler has looked at the poster board and he wonders how many hours were in that and how many people actually know it exists. It would be nice to see work rewarded.

8. Park Board Member Reports

Stroh has played a lot of tennis at the Gro Tonka Park courts and has been thinking about pickleball courts. She has noticed that usually when a group decides to play a game of pickleball, there are four adults and they all drive separately to the court. At Lone Lake Park, there are eight courts so that is at least 32 parking spots being used, plus more spots for any additional players waiting to play. If you wanted to make a facility like the one at Lone Lake Park, you would have to consider the noise of 32 cars as well as the space those cars will take up. Gro Tonka Park has three tennis courts and 11 parking spots. She thought putting one or two courts scattered among the parks might be better when considering space and noise. That is kind of what tennis and basketball have both done.

O'Dea commented that staff has received enough requests for more pickleball courts where he knows it is something that will be coming to them in the future. He thinks any feedback that the park board members can get will be important. He doesn't have a timeline for when it would come to the park board but he knows they have had a number of requests for additional pickleball courts.

Ingraham attended the August Habitat Stewardship meeting and complimented them on it. He thought it was a very interesting interaction with the volunteers, along with Yetka and Kumka. He thought Kumka did a really good job facilitating that with Heather Holm. He found it interesting and valuable. Just as an observation, at Meadow Park they are finishing installing a new playset there, which is pretty nice and impressive. He complimented the public works staff on the grading. He sees a lot of new grading on the main park paths, which he thinks are a really nice base for accessibility and normal walking because it is packed really hard now. There was a good discussion at the habitat meeting about the paths getting wide. The grading is getting wide and Kumka pointed out that it is probably equipment based. He complimented the stability of the base and said from an accessibility perspective, it is very much approved for strollers, wheelchairs, etc.

9. Information Items

Meadow Park

This report wasn't included in the packet. O'Dea thought they will be finishing the project next week because there is some elevation that they need to correct. It probably isn't noticeable to the average park user, however, they are needing to make a correction. Hopefully that gets corrected in the next week or so because people are anxious about getting on the new equipment.

Fall Registration

Assistant Recreation Director Sara Woeste gave the report.

Ridgedale Commons

Woeste gave the report.

Summer Programming Review

Woeste gave the report.

Skate Park Mural

Kumka gave the report.

Cullen Nature Preserve

Kumka gave the report.

Purgatory

Kumka gave the report.

Ingraham asked if we have ever done a burn on the west side of the park.

Kumka said no, but he has requested a cost to do a burn on the west side this year. There is sort of another area there where some of the woodies are creeping into the habitat and he thinks it would benefit from a burn.

10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

Isabelle asked where the joint meeting will be located.

O'Dea responded that it will be here, in the lower level of the community center and it will start at 5:30 p.m.

Ingraham asked if that meeting will be televised. He remembers last year people were upset that it wasn't televised.

O'Dea said he will have to double check but he believes it will not be televised.

Durbin added that there are always minutes.

O'Dea said there are minutes and it is open to the public to attend.

11. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline

Kathy Kline
Recreation Administrative Coordinator