



**Minutes
Minnetonka Park Board
Wednesday, March 1, 2023**

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Park board members present: Ella DiLorenzo, Anne Hanley, David Ingraham, Ben Jacobs, Katie Semersky, Isabelle Stroh, Corey Beyersdorf and Chris Walick.

Staff members in attendance: Mike Funk, Kathy Kline, Matt Kumka, Kelly O'Dea, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka.

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

3. Reports from Staff

Recreation Director Kelly O'Dea announced that there was an addendum and he introduced City Manager Mike Funk.

Funk thanked the park board for serving the community and he welcomed the newest members.

4. Approval of Minutes

Jacobs moved, Semersky seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of Feb. 1, 2023 as submitted. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

There were none.

6. Special Matters

There were none.

7. Business Items

A. Skate Park Feasibility Final Study

Park and Trail Project Manager Matt Kumka gave the report.

Walick thought the Glen Lake Activity Center was a really good spot for the skate park. He questioned what the liability situation was and if the city would be responsible for someone getting hurt at a skate park.

Kumka answered that recreation is covered by the League of Minnesota Cities. It would be the same liability risk we have for our existing skate park. A lot of neighboring cities also use them.

Walick wondered if these parks can be modified or changed over time so they don't become stale to the users.

Kumka replied that after having conversations with world-class builders, his understanding was that skate parks are quite changeable over time. It's not inexpensive but you can make changes as necessary to update it. The construction techniques are really impressive these days and the skate park features can last a long time.

Walick questioned if parks like these accommodate bikes, rollerblades, scooters, etc.

Kumka answered that the park would be designed for skateboarding but bikes, rollerblades and scooters could use it.

Stroh asked what would happen to the existing skate park in Glen Lake.

Kumka said the obstacles would be removed and they will either give them to an organization or scrap them.

Stroh wondered if the mural would get moved as well.

Kumka replied that staff hopes to maintain the mural. The muralist was aware that we were making big changes and they understood that it wasn't meant to last. He would probably be happy to come and paint another one.

DiLorenzo pointed out that Kumka talked a lot about student groups and young people advocating for this. She wondered if there was a way to get their voices in on some of the planning process or artwork. It would encourage buy-in from this younger generation that seemed interested in it.

Kumka has been considering a design process that would involve the local community as much as possible. The kids at Minnetonka Middle School East are very excited about this potential project. He thought the consultant would make room for that input during the whole process within reason.

Jacobs asked if there are any options for having the playground over there.

Kumka said they haven't looked at it too closely. There is a water treatment plant there and it would be a tight fit. They would have to get creative and consider what size the playground could be. Some engineering might have to be done to fit a potential playground in nearby.

Ingraham said the actual footprint of the play structure is a lot smaller than the park.

Kumka replied that is correct because it's essentially a big sand pit.

Semersky loved this project philosophically because it's a growing sport. We received amazing feedback saying this is what the younger community wanted enhanced. She

questioned what the timeline is like moving forward because to a kid, this is taking a while.

Kumka said that if everything was to go as originally intended they would hire a consultant in the next couple of months and design would take place in 2023 and go into 2024. They would do some bidding sometime over the winter or early spring of 2024 and begin construction in 2024. They would try to wrap all that up and pour the concrete before the snow in late 2024.

Semersky asked if he sees risks to that.

Kumka answered that there are always risks. There are usually surprises in terms of engineering and things that could slow pieces down. The worst case scenario would be that we are building in 2024 and it goes on hold until 2025. A ribbon cutting then would be in the spring of 2025.

Hanley commented that the plan said we would try to manage the storm water. She would be happier if it was a little stronger because she is assuming all the junk from that will go into Glen Lake.

Kumka said he has worked a lot with the local water shed districts and he could see a potential partnership in terms of some green infrastructure associated with a space like this; they are creating a lot of impervious surface. In meeting the expectations of our residents in terms of being ecologically sensitive, he would like some sort of demonstration storm water feature in this scope of work here.

Hanley replied that if it was free, she would be all in. It takes her breath away on how much it is going to cost because you could have two or more miles of trails for that. She was happy that there might be some grants to pay for part of it. It's expensive and it puts us in the situation where we would need to update it as more things are invented to keep it cool.

Ingraham thought it was a very good review of options and ideas. Early on, a goal was to have a regional skate park but we don't have feasible space to do that. He asked what the footprint was for the examples of skate parks that were used.

Kumka wasn't sure but he thought the feasibility report lists a bunch of the local parks and their square footage. The criticism he heard about the skate park in Eden Prairie was that its total square footage is really large in terms of the usability but the actual skating surface has a lot of void space in the park. That means the square footage isn't quite accurate when it comes to those considerations. He pointed out that 20,000 square feet is the skateboarding industry standard.

Ingraham asked if there was any consideration with the recommended location to eliminate the strip of parking adjacent to the existing park to increase the footprint. That strip is mostly used for Hennepin County Medical Center's ambulance staging and isn't really used other than that. There is a big topographical difference between 4,000 square feet and 11,000 square feet; there is no way parents would be able to observe their kids skating at both sites unless you build a tower. With having two spots, you are creating two distinctly different environments which might be good but that may not be ideal for parents.

Kumka heard the separate nature of the two was a value in terms of the two skate communities. Typically, parents would only watch the younger kids and the older kids sort of begin skating to get away a little bit. In terms of an analysis of the overall site, if they hire a consultant, everything would be on the table. If they needed to have conversations about those parking spots, they would start the process at that point.

Ingraham explained that from a safety perspective, he assumed kids living on the opposite side of Excelsior Boulevard will want to get there. Right now, the only controlled crossing is a flashing light by Lunds and Byerlys. Kids are going to want to cross earlier if they are coming from east of the park area. It would be very advantageous to see if the county would let us put in another controlled crossing because that is a really busy street and people don't pay attention when they are on the road. Lastly, during ball games, the parking overflows into the Lunds and Byerlys parking lot. Parking is going to be more of a challenge if the skate park is popular during games.

Kumka said part of their scope of design would be traffic and pedestrian analysis; it would also include parking and potential parking impacts.

Beyersdorf thought staff has done an amazing amount of research and analysis on this. She was glad to see that there was a lot of thought around the different locations. She thought the Glen Lake area was a good idea and she agreed with Ingraham about potentially looking at maybe switching the parking area to where the playground is. That would give you one large space for the skate park. Kids have told the park board what they are looking for. As a board, they have to think about the community as a whole and take into consideration what the younger kids want and need. There are so many recreational pieces made for adults and we don't really take into consideration what the younger folk's need, especially kids that don't play organized sports. She thought this was something they really should consider. She is completely for this and is really glad they are doing it.

Stroh asked if Glen Lake Groomers had any perspective on where their parking is or how their business is going to be impacted.

Kumka said they met with the owner early on in the process and informed him that they would be looking at this particular site for a skate park. They have their own dedicated driveway and their own dedicated parking behind their building.

DiLorenzo commented that she doesn't skate but she could see herself hanging out in this space if there was green space or something in between. She asked if there was a way to make it informational to explain where the water is coming from and where it is going, and then also give information about the green space. It would be creating something for people to do that don't skate especially if that park is being taken away or moved.

Kumka said they are always looking for opportunities for education and tasteful interpretation. Especially with some of these green infrastructure type concepts or the use of native plants.

Walick said there is going to be a lot of unique planning involved. He is very excited about this because it is another thing for the youth and they've advocated for it. Sometimes it

seems like it is taking forever or the cost is high, but they are learning that is kind of the way things go for quality changes.

Jacobs moved, Beyersdorf seconded a motion to proceed with the Glen Lake Activity Center site and move onto the next steps with community involvement. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

B. Tennis Court Resurfacing (Junction/Linner)

Kumka gave the report.

Hanley asked if it was possible to require people to switch to the quieter paddles.

O'Dea explained that enforcement would be challenging.

Hanley commented that neighbors and people who use Lone Lake Park can hear the pickleballs until they get over the ridge; it has changed the nature of the park experience. She read the comments and there was a lot of passion about how noisy it is. She wondered if they could prove that with different equipment, it might not be so horrible.

Kumka thought what people experience now with hearing or seeing pickleball is what the expectation will be for the near future. Staff isn't in the position to assure the local residents that we could somehow enforce quieter equipment.

Hanley said you could request it but she wasn't sure if anyone would buy it.

Stroh commented that we already have troubles with the dogs so she feels like people are not going to consider other's perspectives and use the quieter paddles.

DiLorenzo understood that this was a very important topic to stakeholders living next to these parks. However, she thinks about accessibility and the people who live in Minnetonka that don't own a home or can't afford to play at a community center. She wondered where they are supposed to play because a lot of our parks exist within a neighborhood context. She asked what steps could be made moving forward that are more inclusive for people who don't own a home in Minnetonka.

Kumka replied that our parks are for everybody, not just the people who live nearby. Maybe the strategy moving forward would be to look at other opportunities like making improvements to existing facilities. They could also make a study regarding the wholesale addition of a dedicated pickleball style facility in one of our larger parks. It could replace an existing recreational facility of some sort such as a skating rink. Staff has floated the idea of assessing skating rinks in the future but they don't have a solid list of sites that they would like to assess.

Walick appreciated staff engaging the residents. He thought this sampling looked like it was two to one, in favor of keeping the courts as tennis courts. He questioned if staff thought that was representative of the broader community.

Kumka explained that it is hard to say because staff tends to hear from folks who want additional pickleball courts, but then they get justifiable concerns from neighbors of a potential site once they reach out to them.

Jacobs thought that they need to take a deep dive and continue to explore places because it is growing like crazy. A lot of local churches and other places are starting drop-in pickleball sessions. These two parks and maybe a community park in general might not be the right way to go about it.

Walick said if it had not been for the resident engagement they probably would've approved this because they hear how much people love pickleball. They want to serve the community and with this sampling they found out that people don't want pickleball courts in their neighborhood parks due to noise, safety, parking and congestion. He wants to respect that.

Ingraham wasn't opposed to the recommendation but if they follow it, he predicts that pickleball courts will never be added in a neighborhood or community park. He believes there would be a similar response in other neighborhoods. It would be hard to say it isn't loud because he's sure the homeowners on the north side of Lone Lake Park don't leave their windows open because the balls are noisy and they are only a quarter of a mile away. It would be great if we could find a way to meet the need for pickleball but it will be hard to do that unless it gets a lot quieter.

Jacobs asked if there is a noise ordinance there.

Kumka explained that the pickleball noise does not come close to our 100 decibel ordinance.

Jacobs asked if there was an ordinance for the hours of play.

O'Dea didn't think there was one.

Jacobs wondered because he has seen people there at 6 a.m. during the summer.

Beyersdorf questioned what the plan was to start looking for more places since there is such a want for more pickleball courts.

Kumka responded that the plan is to do their best to find an appropriate spot for it.

Ingraham mentioned Crane Lake.

Kumka said somewhere near the highway in some sort of an outlot or something that the city owns or acquires might work.

Beyersdorf asked if there is a timeline.

Kumka replied that it is a priority but there is no active timeline.

O'Dea commented that there were a lot of people who said they wanted pickleball during the Parks, Open Space and Trails (POST) Plan. Staff wanted to at least assess the neighborhood parks individually as they came up on the replacement schedule in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Stroh added that nobody wants them in their backyard so they have to find an alternative solution.

Ingraham moved. Jacobs seconded a motion to recommend the resurfacing of existing tennis courts as they exist today. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

C. 2023 Park Board Strategic Plan

Recreation Director Kelly O'Dea gave the report. He mentioned that the Friends of Minnetonka Parks had suggested edits to look at in addition to staff's edits.

Vision & Mission:

Walick appreciated the work and thoughtfulness of the Friends of Minnetonka Parks. He writes a lot of reports and he always leans towards being more concise to make it easier to understand. He felt a lot of the suggested changes made it a little wordy. He suggested using conserving and restoring throughout the document instead of protecting and enhancing because in terms of nature they seem to be more in line with the mission.

Hanley liked the use of conserve and restore in the document and she was okay with a little wordiness. She was in favor of most of the changes in green because it emphasizes that amenities in parks includes natural stuff and not just the built things.

DiLorenzo thought conserve and restore were appropriate with natural resources. She didn't know if she loved the word healthy because it is a vague word but she thought biodiverse was too specific to natural resources. Biodiverse is the natural environment but she also thinks about creating recreational opportunities.

Hanley asked if she liked that.

DiLorenzo replied that she liked biodiversity because it was more specific than healthy. She is trying to express that there should be a tension between taking care of natural resources but also making sure there is space for recreational opportunities to still exist or coexist with it. She liked the word biodiversity overall.

Ingraham questioned if the vision was intended for parks and recreation facilities only. This is a park board document so it is related to the scope of what they do which is parks and facilities. If you strike the word recreational facilities, it takes out the focus on Gray's Bay Dam, the athletic field and other facilities. He thought it was intended for the parks and recreation facilities so some stuff adds more words than they need. He liked biodiverse but he believes there is a difference between a biodiverse natural environment and a healthy natural environment. Biodiverse talks about how everything goes together like plants; healthy is how humans interact with the natural environment. He is fine with either word but he wouldn't want healthy to go away. Either protect and enhance or conserve and restore are a good way to go. To him, he views the natural amenities and enjoyment of natural amenities as part of recreational opportunities so he doesn't know if they need to be specifically called out.

Stroh questioned if some of these more tailored changes would be better in a separate document. Things like conserve and restore would definitely belong here but she thought

there should be a balance between the human and natural elements. Maybe some of the natural things could be in a separate set of goals and objectives in the document.

Beyersdorf asked if we have changed our name because the document says the mission of the Minnetonka Park and Recreation Board and she thought it was the Minnetonka Park Board.

Semersky added that their scope is both. She thought it was misleading if you only call out parks.

O'Dea said it is more about the recreational facilities and opportunities within the parks. An example is the Williston Fitness Center because it is a recreational facility not located in a park. That is why it is not under your purview.

Hanley asked if city staff is responsible for The Marsh and the Williston Fitness Center.

O'Dea explained that staff reports to the city council. The park board scope is parks, trails and open space.

Semersky commented that the vision and mission statements are intended to be short, memorable, concise and easy to read. She thought they were too wordy as they are currently written. She supports being simple and concise so it's easier for them to remember and repeat to people when they are describing what they do as a group.

Stroh said that the vision and mission have to encompass a lot of things so keeping those vague might make more sense.

Ingraham thought the original draft was good and some of the suggested edits were very good. He liked the rewording on objective five about aligning with the goals or recommendations of the Natural Resource's Master Plan (NRMP) and the POST Plan. On objective two, he thought their edit changed the intent of that objective. He read it as the implementation of the stewardship program, not just the execution of the master plan. Those are two different things but it depends on what we want. He thought some of the emphasis on amenities and calling them out separately was unnecessary but he is fine with leaving it in if others feel they should be articulated separately.

O'Dea asked if there were any comments about the second or third bullets under the mission because there was a lot of verbiage added.

Ingraham views the natural amenities as part of our recreational opportunities. He thought it got wordy when you add judiciously curating to it.

DiLorenzo thought the overall focus on nature and the fact that parks and recreation includes natural spaces is an important thing to think about moving forward. Sometimes people think it has to be a park or some physical thing but it could also be a native grassland you can enjoy and that is biodiverse. She liked the emphasis but thought they could change a few words instead of all the suggested changes.

Beyersdorf said on the second one you could just say, "Promote quality inclusive recreation opportunities and natural amenities."

Goal: To protect natural resources and open space

Ingraham asked Natural Resources Manager Leslie Yetka if objective two was saying something different than what was intended.

O'Dea questioned if it was the stewardship program versus NRMP.

Yetka said historically the stewardship program is what they refer to as their restoration program in our parks. The NRMP is a much broader plan that encompasses more than what they do in our parks. The intent was to focus on the activities that are mostly taking place in our parks, which is the stewardship program. If you are interested in expanding to the NRMP in general, it encompasses what they are trying to achieve.

Hanley asked if there is a stewardship plan to refer back to.

Yetka said the stewardship plan is our NRMP. It's a bit confusing because this has been a terminology that has been in existence for many years. When they say stewardship program, they mean our habitat restoration program. That is a big component laid out in the NRMP but the master plan encompasses more than just habitat restoration.

Ingraham learned last night at the sustainability commission meeting that the park board involves things in the park, not things in the city. That would lean towards stewardship program versus NRMP.

Hanley added that maybe it's the parks portion of the NRMP because then there is actually something you can look at.

Ingraham questioned if that is the stewardship plan.

Yetka confirmed it was.

Hanley commented that you can't find the stewardship plan if you search the website but you can find the NRMP. From a usability standpoint, it seems helpful to call it something you can find in a database.

Ingraham said he is fine either way. He was referring to the No Mow May Plan, which is part of the natural resources area. However, he found out it wasn't something they would talk about because people mow their own lawns and they take care of parts of the city that aren't in the park areas so it is much broader than that.

Yetka added that it would be private property.

Jacobs questioned what the correct one to use is.

Yetka said you could say, "continue to review and comment on implementation of the natural resources stewardship program as guided by the NRMP." It is covered either way and she isn't worried that the intent would be lost. If you want to include the NRMP as something people could find on the website, you could incorporate it in here and have both of them mentioned.

Ingraham liked the rewording on objective five.

Beyersdorf looked up the definitions of conserve, protect, restore and enhance to see what the difference was between using those words. Protect and conserve are basically the same thing but she pauses when using restore instead of enhance. When you use restore, it makes it into an action item and it's saying that you have to restore it or fix it. If you use enhance, it can be kind of anything. They are basically the same word but she thinks if you use restore instead of enhance that it is trying to get us to do something by putting it in here.

Hanley added that the city has made a big commitment in money, time and volunteer hours to restore by getting rid of the buckthorn and the garlic mustard. She thought that was worth saying.

Beyersdorf wondered if it is also an enhancement because you can enhance things by restoring them.

Hanley commented that enhance could also mean planting flowers.

Beyersdorf replied that if we say restore, we are limiting our ability to enhance. Its wordsmithing so just changing the wording can change the meaning a little bit.

Walick added that this is a general guiding principal and not a legal binding document. He thought either way would probably be ok.

Hanley voted for the word restore.

Stroh thought restore got changed in a lot of different places throughout the document. Putting it in there a couple times to honor the work with the buckthorn would definitely be something to consider, but changing it throughout the entire document might limit it. Enhance could be more general and it might include more of the amenities such as the skate park that we are considering for the parks.

Ingraham thought restore was very specific and it's saying you need to fix it. There is a lot of things that we need to fix so he thought it was a good word to use. He thought the word restore fits inside the word enhance. He gave an example of putting in a wooden viewing thing along the creek; they wouldn't be restoring anything but they would be enhancing it. He personally liked the word enhance because it is broader. He thought protect and conserve were pretty interchangeable.

Hanley explained that the whole section was about natural resources and open spaces. She felt that the goals, "To renew and maintain parks and trails" and "To provide quality athletic and recreational facilities and programs" could easily encompass things like a gazebo or a skate park. The first goal doesn't need to encompass everything and there are other goals or objectives that it could go under.

Goal: To renew and maintain parks and trails

Hanley asked if seven will give them permission to work on the dog topic.

O'Dea responded that it is part of it.

Semersky asked if you need to call out the dog topic anywhere to be more specific because it is a heated topic.

O'Dea explained that the off-leash piece is part of the park ordinance and they are looking at updating the entire ordinance. It wouldn't be specific to dogs because they would be looking at updating other things in the ordinance too.

Ingraham thought the addition to objective six from the submitted comments about aligning with the POST Plan and NRMP was fine.

Jacobs thought both of the additions were fine.

Goal: To provide quality athletic and recreational facilities and programs

DiLorenzo thought there was a lot of interest in natural resources. If we are going to invest in skate parks and other things, she thought we should also apply that same appreciation and interest into nature. It could be a really positive thing and it would show that we are trying to be more inclusive about those principals.

Goal: Enhance long-term park board development

Semersky and Hanley supported those changes under the six objectives.

Semersky questioned if anything was expected from them with the Ridgedale Commons opening.

O'Dea answered that they would love for them to show up at the ribbon cutting. Construction is anticipated to be finished at the end of May. We are going to start programming in the building and we will have other programs in the park area such as the farmers market.

8. Park Board Member Reports

Walick said with all the snow in the last couple of weeks, the city did an awesome job clearing the roads and making it livable.

9. Information Items

Kids' Fest

Woeste gave the report.

Ingraham said the lines were really long but he didn't hear anyone complaining.

Recreation Services 2023 Summer Brochure

Woeste gave the report.

2022 Natural Resources Annual Update

Yetka gave the report.

10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

11. Adjournment

Jacobs moved, Beyersdorf seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 p.m. All voted "yes."
Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline

Kathy Kline
Recreation Administrative Coordinator