



**Minutes
Minnetonka Park Board
Wednesday, December 6, 2023**

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

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

Staff members in attendance: Ann Davy, Darin Ellingson, Kathy Kline, Matt Kumka, Megan Mulligan, 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 mentioned that there was an addendum.

4. Approval of Minutes

Hanley mentioned she was having difficulties keeping track of which park was being discussed and which park the comments were being directed towards. She thought it was sequential but sort of got lost on which park was being talked about.

O'Dea stated that we can look and see if we can crosscheck that.

Ingraham commented that the minutes mentioned the picnic shelter at Lone Lake Park and he wondered if that was happening or not.

O'Dea replied that Street and Park Operations Manager Darin Ellingson is going to talk about it during the information items.

Ingraham moved, Hanley seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of October 11, 2023 with suggested edits. 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. Purgatory Park Master Plan – Public Feedback Summary

Park and Trail Project Manager Matt Kumka gave the report.

Engagement Overview

Hanley asked Kumka to clarify if the 1,000 plus written comments were from the surveys or from people who wrote in.

Kumka answered that a lot of the comments were from people writing in loose comments at the open house events. They had boards where people wrote their thoughts down.

Hanley asked if it included emails to Kumka and he replied no.

Ingraham questioned if he wrote five comments whether it would be considered five comments or one comment.

Kumka answered it would be five written comments but you could only take the survey once. The survey represents the quantitative data. The written comments are sort of all over the map and are collected and categorized. The survey represents individualized opinions.

Ingraham asked if this is a low, average or high response compared to other things that have been done on Minnetonka Matters.

Kumka estimated that it was quite high.

Ingraham commented that Kumka said 88 percent use the primary trails but on the presentation it says 88 percent feels there are enough primary trails in the park. He wondered which statement was correct.

Kumka explained that 88 percent of people feel that the maintained trail is adequate for their needs.

Key Topic Areas from Resident Feedback

Hanley asked if there was a picnic site by the red barn.

Kumka replied that there is one just south of the red barn, closer to the parking lot.

Hanley questioned if it is where you would park and walk up the hill.

Kumka said yes. Folks that relate this question to the red barn are interested in it functioning as some sort of picnic space.

Ingraham questioned if the expectation is that the red barn could survive for use or is it likely not survivable.

Kumka responded that at this point, they are referring to a structural analysis that was done over 10 years ago. It had some pretty high-level costs in terms of protecting the structure as-is. Staff would need to reassess the structure of the barn and perform cost

analysis to understand what the possible reuses of it could be. It's sort of a stand-alone, site specific design that includes the architecture of the barn and potential reuse.

DiLorenzo questioned where the operating money would come from if it became a public facility.

Kumka answered that it would be part of this study. If the master plan gets passed to the city council and gets adopted, that would tell staff to study it and figure out what it could be. It would then be budgeted in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) as a specific project and staff would look into things like usage, staffing and how to pay for it.

Walick opened the floor for public comment.

Eric Moreira, 5554 Nantucket Place, Minnetonka mentioned that their property abuts Purgatory Park. He thought the notes from the September's joint meeting with City Council and Park Board was going to address off-leash dogs but he didn't see anything in them. He was curious when that would be discussed.

Kumka explained that we weren't quite far enough along in the master plan process to present at the joint meeting. We are having this conversation now, then putting the draft plan out in mid-January, and then having a reaction park board meeting to that first draft. It will eventually get to a council meeting if it is recommended by the park board to move it to that level. At this point, it wouldn't be until the spring.

Ingraham added that when planning the joint meeting in 2022, the city council committed to a study session on the dog ordinance and off-leash dogs in general, not just related to Purgatory Park. In the city council's work plan for this year, the only reference to the issue was at the September joint meeting. He wondered if the city council was committed to address the issue of dogs in general. It would include dogs at Purgatory Park but also the ordinance issue. He continues to be appalled by the report they received by the Community Service Officer (CSO) last year. She talked about a situation where a CSO was ignored by three different dog owners who did not participate with feedback and didn't control their dogs; one owner even left their dog in the park. The ordinance is so difficult to interpret and it puts them in a very awkward position. He thought this was something the city council should be talking about. If an officer went into Target and tried to deal with a customer issue and had similar feedback to the dog owner, he doesn't think the city council would be turning their head. He questioned if they were going to address the issue in a study session. If they aren't going to, then let the park board know.

O'Dea commented that he will talk to the city manager because he is the one who communicates to the city council. They go through a list of their priorities for the whole calendar year and there are quite a few of them. They have expressed interest but he doesn't know the specific level of priority. He was thinking this would kind of dovetail with the results of the Purgatory Park Master Plan and something would come out of that.

Ingraham explained that the results aren't surprising to him in the fact that half the people are comfortable and half the people are uncomfortable. The reality is probably 90 percent of dog downers are fine, understand the rules, and are able to control their dogs to the point that they aren't a problem. Then you have five or 10 percent of people who are like the examples that the CSO provided and Angela mentioned in her email that

was listed in the addendum. He has seen it and experienced it himself where you have individuals that think it is their park. There was a report at Bryant Lake's dog park where a dog owner was assaulted by another dog owner. Her friend's dog was being attacked by another dog and she tried to separate the dogs. The owner of the attacking dog who was ignoring the issue, tackled the woman and grabbed his dog and left the park. Purgatory Park hasn't gotten that bad but he brings that up because that is not due to an approved ordinance, it's about the people. The ordinance needs to be looked at hard so residents can confidently talk to somebody and CSO's can try to correct behavior.

Jacobs asked how they can reconcile the reports they've received regarding the issues with the 64 percent of people in this survey that don't want change. He wondered if they do a further study with more outreach.

Hanley questioned if Jacobs was asking if it is ok to do something even though they are going to make a bunch of people mad.

Jacobs responded that if we are representing the people of Minnetonka, it's not necessarily about what they personally want. For example, if he thinks we should do this but 64 percent of people say they don't think we should, he thinks that 64 percent of people are being disregarded. He understands a lot of people are on the other side too.

DiLorenzo thought the results were surprising based on the conversations they've had and the perspective they've heard. At a certain level, there is a duty to look hard at this if so many people are satisfied and are using the park. We also have to acknowledge that not every space is for every person. They can do their best to create the most inclusive environment but she is struggling with how to deal with the data of concerns since 600 people said this without being the loudest voice in the room. They have to look at who they are representing. She believes this has been pushed off for a long time. They really need to look into the ordinance so there is some backing if they choose to change something. She would like more research on it so they can get more data to see what the citizens really want.

Jacobs agreed with Ingraham that it would be nice to get it on a schedule. He felt like they have been kicking the can for two years.

Hanley believed that the ordinance is the way it is because there was no consensus about where to put a dog park.

Ingraham replied that the ordinance doesn't deal with the dog park at all. It deals with just the ability to have a dog in Minnetonka and having it off-leash in a neighborhood, park or anywhere in the city.

Hanley thought there was a connection between creating that ordinance to allow off-leash dogs in parks because there was no consensus about where to put a dog park. Allowing dog's off-leash in parks gave people a place to exercise their dogs.

Ingraham said there are two parts to this. There is a city code regarding dogs in the city and there is a park regulation that talks about off-leash dogs in parks. The park regulation kind of relies to some extent on the language in the city code, which, makes it difficult for public service officers to enforce it because it is really ambiguous as how to control your dog. If you go back to the Parks, Open Spaces and Trails (POST) Plan, he

thought it was around 20 percent of people who felt they weren't safe in parks. In this survey, there are 47 percent of people who are discouraged by off-leash dogs so this one is actually worse than the POST Plan. The police have 2,000 calls a year about off-leash dogs. He's aware that it isn't a huge issue like burglary for example, but that is a lot of calls. That has nothing to do with the parks, it's just people who feel uncomfortable about things going on in their neighborhood. He thought the city should take a hard look at this language because surrounding cities have much clearer language on what you can and can't do. Most surrounding cities say you can't have off-leash dogs except in a formal dog park. He isn't necessarily pushing for that because if owners were responsible at Purgatory Park, he thinks the way it works in the center of the park is manageable. The problem is that not everyone is responsible and it's not the dog's fault, it's the owners fault.

Cindy Eyden, 16824 Excelsior Boulevard, Minnetonka lives very close to Purgatory Park and goes there once to twice a week and sometimes more than that. She is also one of the people that says she is sometimes intimidated to be in the park because of dogs. Since this issue arose and was going to be discussed in more detail, people have been a little more responsible. She has seen that people don't control their dogs and the dogs do charge at you. The dog owners don't think it is a big deal but she thinks it is a problem. She also volunteers in the park and they have had 35 events dealing with taking care of buckthorn and have put in 345 hours of volunteer services to take care of the park. To the park board's point of just going with what the majority wants, she would like you to be a little more discerning about that. If dogs can trample throughout the park, those 345 hours of service very well should be undermined. That's because dogs are going to do their business wherever they want and owners do not follow up on that when they are off-leash. The dogs are also going to spread the seeds of invasive species. The hard work they have put in could very well be undermined by that and it would be very discouraging for the people who are volunteering there. She advised them not to just do whatever people want but to also look at the effects of it.

Hanley mentioned that at the joint meeting, councilmember Deb Calvert pointed out that we don't want to spend a lot of time and money on restoration and then have dog and foot traffic obliterate the central part of Purgatory Park. She's aware that part of it is due to the drought but a lot of restored prairie is now just dirt where the dogs run. We shouldn't be pouring money into the parks with one hand and then negating all the effort with the other.

Semersky asked if the data was sliced for heavy users of the park since 67 percent of the people are there once a week or more. She was curious if the results looked the same or greater for the group of people who are really heavy users because they are the most passionate folks about that park. She questioned if the target market focused on the people who are at the park. She was curious if the insights changed at all because that might help her discern. She wasn't sure if more research would help them. They'd have to talk about how the objectives would be different or what would change. They could do more research but people will still love it the way it is and people won't like it that way. They just have to make some courageous decisions based on what they see and hear.

Ingraham said that you have to consider the people who used to like the park and don't go there anymore.

Semersky added that you have to consider the safety risks.

Eyden suggested looking at how the park regulations would affect all the parks if they were going to consider looking at the park regulations for Purgatory Park. You can't make a regulation for one park and not have it hold for all the parks. Whatever you decide needs to be consistent because people have different kinds of expectations in different parks.

Walick thought there was something to be said for the 64 percent of people who don't want the ordinance changed. However, you also have 36 percent of people wanting it changed and you have consider their reasons for wanting it changed. Safety is an important consideration when talking about changing the park ordinance.

Jacobs questioned what has to been done to get it to the city council because it really is a city ordinance issue. It is something that will have to be changed throughout every park and it is going to be a process because people are essentially going from no rules to putting a leash on. It is a safety thing but it also involves looking at other communities and setting expectations.

Hanley suggested talking to people who use Purgatory Park and other parks as dog parks to find out what would be an acceptable alternative for them.

DiLorenzo wanted more clarity on if the issue is the dogs being off-leash or that there is no way to enforce a consequence. Those are slightly different to her and what she is hearing from some people is that someone enjoying the park can't show someone a sign and tell them that their dog can only be in a certain area or it has to be leashed in the parking lot. It's uncomfortable as a private citizen to be policing other people and then the community officers don't have any consequences for those people. She thought it would be helpful having clarity around the rules and potentially what the consequence are if you don't meet that expectation. For example, if a dog charges at you, you can submit a formal complaint and if the dog gets two formal complaints, it can't go to the park. Maybe that is unrealistic and she's not sure who would manage that but she thinks if there is no consequence that the behavior will continue. If we want it to change we need to figure out what the consequences would be. Some dog owners are great with their dogs but what is the consequence if they are not a great dog owner. The CSO also kind of said that there was no consequences. Maybe it is that you can have your dog off-leash but if it doesn't follow the rules, you can't bring it anymore. She doesn't think people have an issue with people that are following the dog rules and staying on the path and not destroying restoration work.

O'Dea replied that it is tough because we don't have the staffing in the parks to enforce those things. He believed the safety officers have talked about writing tickets but because of the language in the ordinance, the ticket gets thrown out.

DiLorenzo suggested a public board that displays pictures of dogs that don't cooperate. Maybe that would encourage people to be better.

Ellingson added that they could consider the current park regulations without getting into the ordinance. It could be a sign that says, "Unless otherwise signed, dogs may be off-leash." It could be part of the Purgatory Park Master Plan and you could have a park

map that shows designated areas in the park where dogs can only be off-leash or you could have a dog park. That would also conform to the current park regulations.

Walick said it opens the question about having a dog park in the area, which is a 50/50 split.

Semersky questioned if there are designated areas for dogs currently or if it is just that dogs need a leash when in maintained areas and can be unleashed in unmaintained areas.

Kumka said it is maintained and unmaintained but the definition of those are confusing.

Semersky said they could make that more specific. Maybe there could be a smaller space where dogs are allowed off-leash.

Ingraham added that dogs would have to be under voice control, which doesn't work. He asked if it was worth adding this topic to the January 3, 2024 meeting agenda so they could look at the park regulations and the city ordinance as a group. They could also look at what surrounding cities regulations or ordinances say.

O'Dea commented that tonight Kumka is trying to get the park board's feedback to help navigate what types of recommendations they are going to put in the plan. If there is information that would help you provide input that would go into a recommendation, it might be possible for staff to get that for you by the January 3, 2024. However, with the master plan going out in mid-January, he's not sure if that is feasible but staff could try.

Kumka said staff understood that they needed this conversation to breathe a bit. For the timeline, they don't need to stick to those dates necessarily. They can change it to whatever is necessary to accommodate the appropriate conversation.

Ingraham thought they could do that formally because it's not just related to Purgatory Park. It would help them to have a clearer understanding and it might help tee up the issue more for the city council to look at. There is a good percentage of our residents that are concerned about this topic.

Kumka said staff has also been playing with this idea of sort of a phased implementation of change. That means signage could be worked in immediately or relatively shortly and then the ordinance could be continued to be studied as we move on.

Ingraham commented that even if your recommendation is to build a formal dog park in a portion of Purgatory Park, there are still going to be dogs that won't be in that fenced in space. They will continue to be in the informal areas unless you have a really strong enforcement practice. That is where the ordinance and rules come into play; you have to make sure they are as clear as they can be. Dog owners who choose not to be in the dog park have to know what their expected behavior is and their dog's behavior is.

DiLorenzo added that she thought it was important to control what they can do. She's not sure how realistic it is to say they are going to change a city ordinance in the next three months. She is thinking about what the park board can take charge of. She liked what Kumka said in terms of tightening up the policy and also figuring out where to put signs. As they continue this conversation, at least there is some immediate things

happening. That way, people don't feel like dogs are running over areas where they just removed a ton of buckthorn. She doesn't want to get stuck in this "what if" conversation for two years and not doing anything about it. They can at least start taking some actions steps that are in their control and they can implement it and keep pushing the city council to look at the ordinance. Then at least people can get used to dogs being under control. Hopefully that would create a little bit of an environment where there is some accountability happening in the community. She doesn't want it to get stuck in the "maybe there will be a dog park eventually" stage.

Hanley would like to see somebody figuring out where there could be a dog park or multiple dog parks, if necessary. Eden Prairie has five dog parks.

Walick thought that was a bigger conversation and it could come back as a recommendation in the Purgatory Park Master Plan.

Hanley said it would be helpful to know what sort of space would be required and where those spaces could be. It would also be nice to know if there is another city that has a similar ordinance to us and what other cities in the metro have as an ordinance.

O'Dea agreed that it is a bigger conversation. The process to figure out where to place dog parks would probably be similar to the skate park process. It was a long process because we went through all the criteria. Staff would want to do that again if that was one of the recommendations out of the plan.

Hanley didn't think it was going to be instantaneous but if we don't start looking for space, we will never find it.

Kumka reminded everybody that this master plan is the first of many. If staff is advised to look for dog park locations in the future, that could move out of this process. As we assess other parks, they can create prioritization types.

Hanley said from a selfish perspective, she would like one sooner than later to protect the restoration areas and minimize the erosion.

Ingraham went through the different leash-laws in surrounding cities.

- Eden Prairie: "Pets are required to be on a leash, not to exceed six feet in length when they are off their owner's property. If your dog loves running free, visit one of Eden Prairie's dog parks."
- Edina: "Your dog must be leashed at all times including city parks, an exception is the city's off-leash dog area at Van Valkenburg Park with a current license and off-leash permit."
- Plymouth: "Dogs and cats prohibited from roaming at large." A general rule is "No owner of a dog shall permit it to be at large within the city. Every owner of a dog or cat should keep it under restraint at all times, exceptions to this requirement are dogs allowed to be in open body of water by ice for training."
- St. Louis Park: "Dogs are not allowed to run at large at St. Louis Park unless they are in an off-leash dog park. Dogs must be controlled by a leash, no more than 20 feet long, which is shortened to six feet when another person or animal is within 20 feet."

- Golden Valley: “Dogs must be leashed at all times while on public land. Leashes may not exceed 20 feet in length and must be shortened to six feet when another person or animal is within 20 feet.”
- Excelsior: “No owner of any animal shall permit such animal to run or move at large at any time within the city. The finding of any animal running at large shall be prima facie evidence of violation of this section by the owner of the animal.”
- Wayzata: “All dogs are expected to be restrained at all times unless on private property or in designated areas.”

Walick thought he was hearing that the city ordinance is something they definitely want to consider, however, in terms of this park master plan, it’s not something they necessarily need. It still could come up in terms of a recommendation, but if it doesn’t, it sounds like it is still something that they could address.

O’Dea replied that staff would like the park board to give them feedback on whether this should be included.

Jacobs questioned what the sign says at Purgatory Park when you walk out of the parking lot now.

O’Dea mentioned that Ingraham suggested a quick review of the park regulations and specific dog language and we can do that in January if the board would like to. He wasn’t sure if that would push anything back or if they could do the preliminary strategies at the same meeting.

Ellingson answered that the sign at Purgatory Park says, “Dog Rules - Dogs must be leashed on maintained trails in maintained park areas in parking lots.” The next section says, “Dogs may be off-leash in unmaintained areas only if under voice command.” The next section says, “Must have a bag to pick up after dogs at all times and must not disturb or harass park users or other pets.”

Jacobs is all for having a next step that we can do soon like putting up new signs. He wondered how they can change the sign to make it more applicable because none of those things are happening that Ellingson mentioned. He thought maybe the sign was too arbitrary. He also wondered where to place the sign to make them be effective. He recommended doing signs but they have to figure out how to do them effectively so people are more likely to follow them.

Hanley suggests they should work on at least a preliminary change to what the rules should say. She doesn’t think the rules are working as they are stated.

O’Dea asked if Hanley was talking about the sign or the actual park regulation.

Hanley replied that she is talking about the park regulations. Even if we have a clearer sign, she thinks it would have to be a lot bigger because there would be a lot more words. She thought that a sign by itself wasn’t going to be enough.

Jacobs asked what the next step would be if they had a sign.

Ingraham believed they wouldn’t have all the issues if people would adhere to what is on the sign. That is because most of the complaints are, “I was walking my dog on the

maintained trail and an unleashed dog came up to me.” That is against what our current sign says, so it comes down to enforcement and people’s willingness to play by the rules.

Jacobs mentioned that it had to be extremely clear. Maybe you put up signs saying, “You are now entering a dog leashed area” or “Now you are entering an unleashed dog area”. It might be a lot of signs though.

Ingraham suggested maybe putting up a 5x7 foot sign when you pull off Excelsior Boulevard that says, “Your car is now entering Purgatory Park, do not exit your car with your dog off-leash.” That is what people do, they pull in the parking lot and open the back of their vehicle and the dog bolts into the park. That happens a lot and it is before you see the sign because the sign is when you walk up the trail.

Kumka said the term maintained or unmaintained isn’t clear. Everything is maintained at this point because we are doing restoration all over the place.

Ingraham said the parking lot is pretty clear as being maintained.

Eyden is a Minnesota Master Naturalist and she loves being off the maintained trails. She doesn’t think it is fair that when she goes off the trails that she has no rights and feels like dogs have more rights than she does. She is a birder and doesn’t want to just stay on the main trails where you don’t see the birds. As a Minnetonka resident, she should have a right to be off those trails. Her thought was to have segments where she can also go into the peace and wonder of nature and not just on the asphalt. She thought being more defined in where dogs can be off-leashed in certain areas could be workable for more people. Then she would know where to put her restoration efforts and where she shouldn’t.

Ellingson mentioned that a lot of this discussion is around the ordinance and that would take several months in order to change it so he thinks that would need to be separate. He is trying to get a sense from the park board if they need the ordinance changed before making recommendations for the master plan. You can take steps towards making recommendations for the master plan. If you need the ordinance to help guide you, that is many months away.

Semersky asked if there was only one ordinance that was citywide.

Ellingson answered no. There are leash regulations for in the parks and there are also leash regulations for city streets.

Semersky asked what they could provide input for.

O’Dea replied that they could provide input for the parks.

Semersky asked if the park ordinances apply to all parks.

O’Dea said that it would apply to all parks.

Hanley questioned if the city ordinance allows your dog to run around.

Ingraham said yes.

Jacobs added that they have to be under voice control.

Walick commented that this isn't just at Purgatory Park.

Ingraham said part of the challenge is that the park city code regulation has 15 sub-bullets. The CSO said that they have never had a judge say they can stand up to that and it's because there are loopholes to any one of those sub-points.

Semersky asked if that was for all animals.

Ingraham answered yes, this is the city code that applies to animals if within a park. He believes this is the park specific ordinance.

Walick said he would feel ok with making recommendations based on the park master plan knowing that we need another conversation about the ordinance. This is bigger than Purgatory Park and he's aware that there are lot of moving parts to that. It would also allow them to see what comes up in the Purgatory Park Master Plan in terms of recommendations.

Semersky is tempted to make Purgatory Park kind of a test place for some things to help with the issue. She liked staff's idea of putting things that are easier into a short-term phase and then figuring out what actions are more long-term that require citywide ordinance changes.

DiLorenzo asked to change the language to be more explicit to behaviors that are permitted and behaviors that are not, even voice control seems a tiny bit vague to her. She wondered if that meant the dog has to come within two seconds or how long do they have to respond. We really have to be concise but explicit on what it says because reading that feels very ambiguous and she thinks people take advantage of ambiguous. For the short-term, she would love to see signs that are clear with explicit examples. She would also like to start making a map on where those signs should be placed in intentional ways that protects a lot of the conservation that is going on. It's not explicitly going against anyone, it is just being clearer about what they already have in place so people actually follow what is expected.

Ingraham said the current ordinance states that the person must demonstrate that the dog will respond to the person's voice command on the very first command given. The challenge is that nobody walks around with city codes, in fact, the city codes are listed on a municipal website and not the city's website. If you go to the city's webpage, you get a shorter list that states, "Dogs must be on a leash at all times except under voice command in ungroomed areas of the parks and trails. Pets are not permitted on any developed areas of parks or trails. A dog can be under voice command in neighborhoods only if it is directly beside an owner."

Walick added that not everyone follows the rules but having clear and concise signage might help. As Ingraham mentioned, some people might walk around with ordinances in their pocket but most people probably don't.

Jacobs thought maybe you can go as far as having color coded signs. A green sign could be the “go zone with dogs” and the red sign could be the “stop and get a leash on your dog zone.”

Ellingson said those zones would need to come from directions as part of a master plan. We don't have those zones now so there is no way to sign that.

Jacobs responded that if we put that as a recommendation into this park masterplan, then we can have the ordinance discussion.

O'Dea said it feels like there could be multiple recommendations within this plan that are geared towards dogs. Staff is trying to get your feedback so we can formulate those to help the consultant formulate those recommendations. That will come back to you again and then to the city council.

Semersky said we didn't really talk about the barn.

Ingraham said we should do something with the barn.

Kumka reminded everyone that people were interested in a variety of uses for that site. He asked if it was something they would like to see in the master plan and if staff should study this idea.

Walick thought we should study it. Kumka mentioned earlier, the structural assessment is 10 years old so he wondered what it would take to fix it and make it useable. He would love to hear more about potential options for it.

Jacobs suggested studying it and seeing how you could incorporate multiple suggestions into that space.

Semersky asked if that area is completely protected from off-leash dogs. When you start talking about a playground and off-leash dogs she gets very nervous.

Kumka answered that it isn't officially part of the park yet. It is a city owned lot but isn't officially within the boundaries of the park.

Semersky questioned if there was a natural barrier.

Kumka replied that there is a big earth form that the trolley line was on.

Hanley said there is no fence.

Ingraham questioned if they should start with the point of whether or not it would be good to include this space into the park at a minimum.

Kumka said that would be a consideration coming out of the master plan.

Ingraham thought at a minimum, they ought to do that.

Kumka said otherwise it would essentially be another outlot, one of these lesser maintained parcels that the city owns but is in a public space.

Ingraham recommended annexing it and making sure it is part of the master plan, whether it is to do something or nothing with it. If it is prohibitive to do a development there, at least that is more square footage or acreage to think about for recreation.

Ellingson asked if there were more recommendations of adding other amenities. He asked if the park board has guidance on things or amenities they would like to see there.

Semersky questioned if he meant outside of the ones listed.

Ellingson answered that it could be some of these, all of these, or something else you would like to see.

Hanley commented that somebody had pointed out that Minnetonka doesn't have many picnic shelters that can be reserved. There are quite a few in Hopkins but she's not sure how many of them are used regularly. It would be nice to have another picnic shelter that you can reserve if there were restrooms nearby.

Ellingson said with a picnic shelter, you would need parking because there is nowhere for anybody to park near that shelter and possibly restroom facilities.

Semersky was surprised that the public facility came up the first.

Walick thought it seemed like a very flexible term.

Hanley asked how much verbiage was there about what people really want to see.

Kumka said there is a whole myriad of particular concepts and ideas. We clustered them as best as they could under this idea of a public facility. Some sort of open space that would be either themed or not themed and have reserveable space of various types. It's quite open-ended at that point but we would want to fine-tune that a little bit potentially.

Hanley asked if those comments were linked to keeping the red barn structure.

Kumka said a lot of comments were to keep the barn at all costs.

Angela Moreira, 5554 Nantucket Place, Minnetonka. For the red barn site, it does feel like an appendage at this point because you drive in pretty far until you get to the parking lot. The land form barrier is a fairly large hill so people tend not to go in the northern direction towards Excelsior Boulevard. She would love to see a public facility like a climate and nature center at the bare minimum. She thought a parking facility would be great to utilize that space because you would come down into the park and utilize that whole space rather than feeling like you are coming in and going either north or south.

Ingraham added that Kumka mentioned the fact that there was a trolley line there and suggested placing a big sign or plaque at the site recognizing a piece of history. It's similar to the Burwell House and the Minnetonka Mills area because it is kind of an interesting piece of Minnetonka history that would be great to preserve.

Hanley said maybe there is a transportation museum that would help pay for a sign since it is transit related.

Kumka reminded everyone what the timeline is. The intention would be to summarize what they heard tonight and bring it back to the January meeting. That would include a variety of preliminary strategies or opportunities to further this discussion a bit further.

Hanley asked if there was a possibility of a phased approach to the red barn as well.

Kumka said any sort of repurposing of the red barn would have to be a stand-alone project. That is where they would study it structurally, develop concept plans, budgeting and assessments sort of things. It would be a stand-alone project but they would need direction to repurpose the red barn from the master plan.

Ellingson said they are trying to make a vision of what the site would look like as part of the master plan. Then as we implement it, it would be phased. They would get the idea of the plan, get the framework and the goals set up now so they know what they want the site to look like in the future. We want a future map of what the park is going to look like in a certain amount of time which includes the red barn. This includes parking lots, bathrooms, trails, etc...this is what you want it to look like in the long-term.

Kumka added that if they pursued a budget or grant in the future, having a concept plan and a master plan to show what they have decided on could take them a long way.

Hanley asked if they could show them on that map where the red barn is.

Ellingson showed her on the map where it is.

Hanley asked if all that land is attached to the barn.

Ellingson said yes.

Hanley asked what the little notch is on the map.

Ellingson said it is possibly an old right-of-way that is unused.

Ingraham said most people tend to think largely of that center two thirds as being Purgatory Park but there is also that area to the left of the red barn along Excelsior Boulevard. He asked if a plan would talk about that space even if they don't do anything with it.

Kumka replied yes, we want the master plan to tie directly into the restoration and maintenance plans. These areas are a little difficult to traverse and we haven't documented any informal trails in those areas. The creek is a barrier and the topography is also a barrier to some degree. We don't showcase any features or amenities in those areas as of now.

Hanley asked if they had enough feedback.

Kumka answered yes. This was great in terms of getting us ready for the next meeting where we can have even more language and you can respond directly to it. It will get us towards the draft plan that would go out to the public for their feedback.

Ingraham asked when we were going to talk about cats in the park.

Kumka replied that staff has gotten a question in the past asking if someone can walk their llama in the park.

Hanley asked what the answer was.

Ellingson said it was more associated with an event and staff suggested finding another location given the unknowns with controlled llamas.

Ingraham asked if annexing the red barn just happens or if that is something they need to vote on to send to the city council.

Ellingson replied that if you identify it now as part of the park master plan then it would be a future implementation.

Hanley asked if there were any downsides to incorporating it.

Ellingson answered that we own the property so whether it is under the umbrella of the park regulations or not, it is a pretty minor distinction.

Hanley moved, Semersky seconded a motion to amend the agenda to move the information items before business item 7B. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

B. Business Item 7B Consideration of the 2024 park board strategic plan.

O'Dea gave the report.

Semersky liked the new format and said it's much clearer.

Jacobs liked the format and having the action items.

Walick thought it looked great.

Hanley asked if the draft strategic plan and the 2023 strategic plan are the same.

O'Dea replied that they are pretty similar because the vision, mission and the goals are the same. Some of the objectives that were in our 2023 plan were specific so they were either put into the action items or removed if they were completed. When the city does their strategic profile, they look at the things we are going to do this calendar year or this cycle. That is why we thought those would be appropriate to have as action items.

Hanley thought those were very clear.

Ingraham liked the new format a lot and thought the action items was a really good change. Under goal two, strategy five, he noticed last year it had dogs included and that disappeared this year.

Semersky thought they made a big effort to add that.

Ingraham said yes and last year it said, "Review park rules and ordinances needed, including dogs." That is not in the draft for 2024.

Assistant Recreation Director Sara Woeste asked if they want that specifically in the action items.

Ingraham replied that it was a goal and questioned if they want it as an action item.

Woeste explained that you could add it as an action item if you want that specific ordinance reviewed. Staff made the strategies a little more broad up front to be more encompassing because every year you review park rules and ordinances. However, we could add it as an action item if you want to specifically review the dog ordinance.

Jacobs asked if it would be added as action item number 12.

Woeste responded that it could be added as a specific action item if that is what we think is going to come out of this master plan.

Walick agreed to add it as action item number 12.

O'Dea said it would be action item 12. If you include it in goal two, strategy five, it could relate to anything else in the park.

Woeste said she will add it as "Review dog ordinance" or maybe park regulations.

Hanley suggested making it broader because she hopes they would also start looking at what a long-term solution might be.

Woeste thought they could say, "Review park ordinances if they relate to dogs." She wasn't sure if that was broad enough but thought maybe putting review dog issues could be.

Hanley said that would be broader because it's not just the ordinances.

Woeste suggested adding in park regulations.

Hanley said it is also space use and possibly turning city outlots into dog parks.

O'Dea said it's broader than just the park regulations.

Semersky questioned the wording on goal four. It says, "Enhance long-term Park Board development" and she wondered if that meant the park board's development. It is written like it is the park board's development but strategy number one didn't really fit.

Hanley suggested changing it to "Enhance long-term park development."

Walick thought it seemed like it was based on the things the park board is going to do.

Woeste thought one solution would be to move strategy one to an action item. Typically you are going to deal with the CIP every year as an action item.

Everyone agreed to Woeste's suggestion.

Hanley asked if it is to develop their collective human understanding of park stuff.

Semersky suggested adding promoting parks to others.

Woeste thought it should be worded something about promoting the park board.

Yetka felt like it is more focused on engaging the park board in activities.

Woeste agreed and added engaging with the community.

Yetka said maybe something along the lines of "Enhance park board engagement."

Walick liked switching development to engagement.

Woeste liked Yetka's suggestion.

O'Dea asked if the strategies would fit if they changed it to engagement.

Hanley asked if just park board engagement would work.

Woeste said maybe changing encourage to enhanced or expected.

Walick liked enhance because you look towards the future.

O'Dea mentioned if anyone has any suggestions after this meeting that they can email him them. The plan is to make these edits and bring it back in January.

8. Park Board Member Reports

Semersky appreciated the city adding new recreation opportunities, such as the tree lighting event and the sauna program. She loved that you are continuing to explore and add new things in areas of community interest.

O'Dea explained that we are renting a sauna for a week and putting it at Shady Oak Beach for people to use on a reservation basis. There were 315 spots and all of them were filled in the first two and a half days.

Semersky mentioned that all our marketing said it was going to fill up fast.

O'Dea said the number of people interested in that is overwhelming. We are getting people who own saunas contacting us wanting to partner with us. Recreation Adult Program Manager Jesse Izqueirido is managing this program.

Ingraham thought the trail from Steele Street to Groveland on Minnetonka Boulevard is really a nice enhancement. It almost looks like a mini park is going in where the parking lot is across from the church. It has been a hard project on a lot of levels and it looks really great. It is great seeing kids walking to school on the trail.

Hanley appreciates the path as a bicyclist.

9. Information Items

Shady Oak Beach Summary

Aquatics and Inclusion Services Program Manager Megan Mulligan gave the report.

Hanley asked Mulligan if she had any information about diversity in both users and lifeguards.

Mulligan responded that lifeguarding is tough because the certification is such a time commitment. We hire a lot of high school and college students so we see a lot of staff who have a swimming background. With the grant she was talking about, they have been talking about how to market lifeguarding as an attractive position to those who maybe don't have a swimming background. Maybe we could provide swimming classes to prepare their skills and prerequisites to take the lifeguard certification and pass it. If you aren't able to pass the certification than there is no way to be a lifeguard. It is nice to have the concession and gate positions so people can start there and train all summer by shadowing lifeguards.

O'Dea complimented Mulligan on a great job. It can be a challenge to operate when managing 60 plus part-time seasonal staff being mostly high school and college age. The main concern out there is safety and they do a very good job.

Farmer's Market Recap

Farmer's Market Manager Korey Beyersdorf gave the report.

Hanley thought the volume of people that came despite the fact that it was in a new place was great. She wasn't sure what would happen when we moved it there.

Beyersdorf thought we had a lot of people who stumbled upon on it. People who came to the information booth would say they had no idea that it was there; they were excited and were going to tell all their friends. Word of mouth is going to be a great way to get people there.

Jacobs stopped by and thought it was great.

Hanley asked about having a sign at the YMCA.

Beyersdorf said they are working on figuring out how to flyer some of the local areas; they had flyers up in the local libraries and things like that. We are also going to work on getting some flyers out to some of the local senior living buildings around there. One apartment complex that is 55+ was very excited to have us there. They were always coming down to see them.

Ingraham said it was a nice venue.

Semersky complimented Beyersdorf and said she did a great job leading it. It was her first year managing the farmer's market, it was at a new location, and she had a short timeline to prepare. You did an awesome job and thank you.

Purgatory Park Restoration Update

Kumka gave the report.

Hanley questioned if MN Native Landscapes seeded after they did all this cutting or if that is going to be done later.

Kumka replied that they did not seed. The city is going to perform a little bit of native seeding this year but in areas where the buckthorn was relatively dense, which is a lot of this area. We are going to manage at least the first half of next year. They will still be under contract and we will be supporting them with city staff but they will be performing re-sprout, cuts and eventually a foliar spray. That is a careful herbicide application of those re-sprouts and the seed that's been accumulating in the soil from the buckthorn. The buckthorn wants to grow right away due to having new sun down on the ground. We have a window where we will be able to get that under control and then probably next fall do significant native seeding in those areas.

Ingraham thought it looks great.

Kumka commented that it has really opened it up quite a bit. There are some really high quality legacy style oak trees on the top of the hill that are really spectacular.

Lone Lake Picnic Shelter

Ellingson said they are planning on installing that park shelter. They'll rebuild what was taken down by reusing the roof beams and columns. There will be all new wood, roof, fascia and a concrete slab. It will be located directly south of the existing parking lot, down by the playground. At the south end of the parking lot there are some rain gardens with footpaths through them. It would be at the bottom of the sledding hill down from the tennis courts.

Ingraham asked when that will happen.

Ellingson said it is a little dependent on the contractor's schedule. We would like to get started on it in the spring. The rain gardens have some overgrown vegetation that we'll do some removals on this winter. Due to the rusty patch bumblebee, there are restrictions on when they can do work. They can't do any vegetation removal in the summer so that work will get done this winter.

Hanley asked if he can talk about the plan for approaching the shelter from the parking lot. The reason she is asking because the picnic shelter down by the lake is listed as handicap accessible and she is assuming it is because there is a paved trail to it.

Ellingson said the grades are a little steep but it will be a little flatter when we do this. Part of the plan is to flatten the slopes so it is an easy walk to get there. It won't be a hike to get to the shelter like it is getting down to the shelter by the lake.

Ingraham said they had an update on the pollinator walk at the last meeting, and he was curious what the status was on the restoration near the basketball court.

Kumka answered that it is a volunteer lead effort that we are calling Aspen Hills. It has long-term volunteers in the park that have been clearing out invasive species. They've been moving up from the basketball court where the road winds down and there is a big lumber retaining wall. That has been a combination of volunteer and city staff efforts. The goal is to open it up and get native seeds so there is high visibility as you come down to that lower part of the park.

Ingraham asked what happened with the power lines and Xcel.

Yetka said that the project has been delayed.

Kumka heard it potentially could happen during spring break. They have conflicts with the poles right by the school entrance and closing the school entrance would be difficult.

Yetka added that staff has requested that they provide us with a plan for the park that includes park and trail closures and how long it is being proposed to be handled. We should have notice of that before it happens.

10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

Hanley asked there is no meeting in April.

O'Dea responded that it is due to spring break for both staff and park board members. It can be a conflict and struggle to get a quorum.

11. Adjournment

Jacobs moved, Hanley seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline

Kathy Kline
Recreation Administrative Coordinator