



**Minutes  
Minnetonka Park Board  
Wednesday, February 7, 2024**

**1. Call to Order**

**2. Roll Call**

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

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

Chair Walick called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

**3. Reports from Staff**

Recreation Director Kelly O'Dea mentioned that there was an addendum that includes comments received after the distribution of the packet for business item 7A. There was an addition to the agenda under special matters; the Friends of Minnetonka Parks will give an update.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Hanley moved, Beyersdorf seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of Jan. 3, 2024. Jacobs abstained. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

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

There were none.

**6. Special Matters**

Tom Stockert from the Friends of Minnetonka Parks (FoMP) gave a presentation on three areas of focus: restoration, education and public outreach. Stockert stated that our volunteers are working closely with staff to develop and implement science based park restoration plans consistent with the Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP). From volunteers, park leaders hold monthly city staff park stewards meetings and participate in city sponsored, public engagement opportunities, their education efforts and public outreach are laid out in detail on the annual report, which can be found on their website or Facebook page. They will continue to hold public education events such as their 100 tickets sell out on Oaks, Fire and Climate Change, presented by Heather Holm with help from Matt Kumka earlier in 2023. Anyone interested in restoration should monitor their website or the city's natural resources website. Volunteers work side by side with Master Naturalists and can learn quite a bit about native plants and restoration. The slide presented shows the impact our 100 percent volunteer organization made in 2023 and that they are planning on exceeding these achievements in 2024. In 2024, they will also educate and train beyond basic and invasive restoration and focus on an overall site planning and restoration. In

December, their board members broke into two committees, one focused on growing volunteers and the other focused on what it means to be a FoMP member. During 2023, they grew their cash balances by over \$4,500 dollars to just over \$6,000. They don't spend much cash as volunteers really are what makes FoMP what they are. Their goal is to grow reserves so they can front money towards larger restoration projects ahead of public money grants. He would be remiss if he doesn't mention they have donation buttons on their website and their Facebook page at the very least, come and visit them at the Farmers Market during the summer. Thank you to the city council, the park board and city staff. You are a large part of the success as they celebrate.

## **7. Business Items**

### **A. Purgatory Park Master Plan – Preliminary Strategies Regarding Dogs**

Park and Trail Project Manager Matt Kumka gave the report.

Walick opened the floor for the park board to discuss.

Ingraham said he has spoken a lot about this issue in previous meetings, so he will try to keep it shorter than he usually does. He thinks all the input they are gathering is great because there is obviously a lot of people here to share their feelings. His background, he and his wife have used Purgatory Park with their dogs for the past 20 plus years. We are on our fourth golden there, the first two they spent a lot of time in the center of the park and on the perimeters in the woods. Their third dog was reactive and so it became very difficult for them to go to Purgatory Park on the formal trails, so they didn't even try to go in the center, but even on the formal trails it was very difficult. They didn't go back to Purgatory Park until they got their fourth dog. He loves Purgatory Park, it's a great place. About 15 years ago, he was where you are, he stood up in the audience and spoke in support of off-leash dogs in Purgatory Park. One of the reasons he did that was at that time, the primary concern was interaction with people on the primary trails and he pointed out then, and it is still true today, that we don't really need to do anything about that because dogs should not be on the maintained trails. If there is a problem with dogs on the maintained trails, it is covered under the current rules. The problem is that the current rules don't work and from his perspective, a lot of it comes down to the way the city ordinance is written, which is mirrored in the park regulations. There is a lot of attitude around what off-leash dog is and what under voice control is. When our community service officers tried to cite people in the past, no judge upholds any citations because our ordinance is so poorly written. He focuses a lot on the 20 percent of the people who feel unsafe, not uncomfortable, but 20 percent of the people feel unsafe in our parks because of off-leash dogs. That comes from the input on the Parks, Open Space and Trail (POST) Plan study that covers all of our parks, not just Purgatory Park. If you look at the results of what Kumka presented today, 40 percent of people are uncomfortable with off-leash dogs. He really thinks there needs to be something done around off-leash dogs in Purgatory Park. He would love it if it could stay the same but the problem is usually it's not the dogs problem, it is the owner having control of their dogs. A lot of the input he has seen is really good, like more communication, more enforcement and all those kind of steps. The city has done a lot of communication, there is signage, there has been information in Minnetonka Memos and it is written up in a lot of places. What he thinks hasn't happened is self-regulations, self-policing by the users. How many times when you have been at the park and someone opens up their car door in the parking lot and let's their dog run loose into the center of the park? Have you said,

“They are supposed to be leashed until they get into the park”? Or, if you are coming down the hill, across the bridge over the creek to go up the hill, and they are off-leash because they are only crossing the path. If you stop someone, just say “you really should leash your dog”. He thinks if we start to do that more it would help a lot but he thinks we really need to look seriously at the ordinance and how it is written. A lot of things that Kumka has laid out today are beneficial in the long-run for the park.

Walick opened the floor for public comments.

Chris Sullivan, 3506 Sunrise Drive West, Minnetonka. He noted that the survey didn't ask if people were disinclined to use the parks because the parks were too restrictive on dogs. Our problem arises because we have two groups of park patrons with mutually exclusive desires. Please consider separating the groups rather than separating parks into areas. Rather than making new rules, dividing parks into different area uses, erecting fences or considering disallowing dogs in whole parks; consider that patrons seeking to walk their dogs must be selective. It seems generally fair to oblige patrons who not want to deal with dogs are similarly selective. If you had the availability of parks where dogs are prohibited, provide those patrons options. As tax payers, they are entitled to getting exactly what they want at some parks. If Purgatory Park, for example is declared a dog-friendly park, patrons wanting to avoid interactions with dogs could go to a different park. That is a park that dog owners currently are obliged to do. Separating groups rather than splitting a park would relieve the city of the burdens of enforcement. Second, his impression is that most pet owners consider their pet's members of their families, as he does; they are also members of the Minnetonka community. He is here to advocate for two members of his family, Leonardo and Diva who are prohibited from even participating in this meeting and barking for themselves. Requiring him to keep them on leashes when he goes to a park degrades his experience of walking in the park but it completely clobbers their experiences. He questioned what claim do Leonardo and Diva have on this services provided in the city of Minnetonka.

Curtis Henry, 1901 Vernon Drive South, Minnetonka. He has been using Purgatory Park for approximately 20-25 years and he has never seen a major conflict between dogs or between dogs and people. There will be skirmishes but dogs police themselves and take good care of their own. Purgatory Park is much more than a park, it is Minnetonka's town square. It is where he and his neighbors get together and talk politics, talk sports, exchange recipes and it is an incredible community. At the fenced dog parks like at Bryant Lake, you get aggressive dogs because there are people there who can't control their dogs and that is why they are in a fenced in area. A majority of the people at Purgatory Park control their dogs very well but once in a while a dog will get away. Yesterday, he was walking in Purgatory Park heading through the big meadow area towards the Excelsior Boulevard parking area where a group of four mentally handicapped young adults around 20-25 years old and their caretaker were coming his coming his direction. One of them was lagging probably 30-40 feet behind the group. Henry's golden retriever ran through the group and went to this kid's feet and sat down and looked up at him so he could pet her. The kid sat down in the mud and pet his dog. Afterwards, the caretaker told him that the kid was having a really bad day and his dog made the kid's day.

Mark Jaffe, 5069 West Mill Road, Minnetonka. He has been a Minnetonka resident since 2006 and raised two kids here. One kid is done with high school and the other one is still in school. The biggest thing for him about the dog issue at Purgatory Park is community;

they bring their dogs there daily. He recognizes so many faces in this room because it is a community and they have genuinely become friends. It's a huge part of their daily life and it is a huge part of their quality of life. He has really never seen any serious negative interactions between dogs and people. He would love for the park to stay the same. It would be helpful to have better signage so people know what parts are the off-leashed areas and what parts aren't. It really is a huge part of their daily life and a huge part of this community.

Benjamin Fabel, 15017 Cherry Lane, Minnetonka. To his knowledge, Purgatory Park is the only place to let your dog's run off-leash in Minnetonka. They could possibly go to Lone Lake Park and do the same thing and nobody could do anything based on the way the rules are written, but nobody does that. He has lived in Minnetonka since 1987 except for moving away for a little while. The entire time he has lived here, Purgatory Park has always been the place you can take your dog. There isn't any other place to take your dog in the city of Minnetonka to run. He understands that the rules have to change because the policy is not clear and people can't be cited for being irresponsible with their dogs. However, for almost 40 years it has been that way. It seems every 10-15 years somebody gets scared of the dogs and they don't want to go to that park anymore. Dog fights happen but he has never seen a human get injured even while breaking up a dog fight there. He has seen people get injured and it has happened to him at a fenced in dog park but never at Purgatory Park.

Jackie Engelhart, 16411 Temple Drive North, Minnetonka. She moved to Minnetonka five years ago and they got a dog during the pandemic and started taking their dog to Purgatory Park on almost a daily basis. One of the things that struck her when she first started going there was that it seemed like a really well designed system. People could walk their dog on-leash around the outside of the park and there was a place for dog's to be off-leash through the middle of the park and on unmaintained trails. The only times when problems may develop are when people are unaware of the rules, they choose to ignore the rules, or they don't think of the consequences of their actions. She was walking her dog last summer through the middle area and went down by the creek where the dogs like to swim. There was a young woman sitting there with a pink blanket spread out with snacks all over the blanket. She asked the woman if she was aware that she was in an area of the park where dogs can be off-leash because they may run up and eat her snacks. She said she was aware of that but that is where her and her friends want to have a picnic. In the meantime, her dog had come back out from swimming and left paw prints on her blanket. She wondered if this young woman took the survey if she would answer that she felt uncomfortable in the park or had a bad experience. There are consequences to choices and if you choose to picnic in an area where dogs are allowed off-leash, there may be a consequence that you don't like. She doesn't think any of the rules need to be changed, but you need to make people more aware of what the rules are and what the consequences are from their choices.

Ed Hassler, 5516 Sanibel Drive, Minnetonka. He and Renee moved to Minnetonka largely because of the very nice off-leash dog rules here. They moved to Sanibel Drive which is right across from Lone Lake Park. Somebody mentioned something about going to Lone Lake Park and their walking dogs. He used to do that without any problems because the south side was completely laced with informal trails. However, the mountain bike trails were built and then it became too dangerous. One of the dogs was almost hit by a mountain biker who was flying through there so they stopped going to Lone Lake Park. That was around five years ago and that is when they started going to Purgatory

Park. He hasn't seen any major skirmishes between or amongst dogs there. They chase each other and bark but he has never seen a full-fledged dog fight. He has seen one or two dogs leave the middle area and go out onto the east side on the crushed limestone trail but it is very seldom. It would be a shame to change anything about Purgatory Park. Towns just don't have town squares anymore but Purgatory Park is the de facto town square for the city of Minnetonka. It is fine if it comes down to having fencing in the park to separate the walkers on the peripheral crushed limestone trail; it would simply be a fence along the inside. There could be another bridge where it crosses Purgatory Creek with another little switch back to get up to where the hilly area is. Then you could put up signage telling people to please leash your dogs if you are going to cross the crushed limestone trail.

Samantha Woodford, 5901 Covington Court, Minnetonka. Her house backs up to Purgatory Park and she has the pleasure of looking out her back window every day and sees the hills, a bench and the back trails. One of the things that both her and her husband noted is how rarely they see non-dog people on those back trails. She works from home and has two sheep dogs and they love to look out the back windows too. She sees people with their dogs every day so she is really hopeful that those trails could be left to the dogs regardless of the decisions made. Someone mentioned earlier, their experience out there watching dogs sniff, smell and explore is as much a part of their experience as it is our experience with being able to see the animals and hear the birds. She doesn't feel like anything should change beyond maybe a little more signage of saying, "here is where you can have your dog off-leash, here is where they have to be on-leash." She has witnessed too many dogs off-leash on the on-leash trails and it does make her sad because that is the stem of this problem. It could hopefully make a huge difference if we could make it more publically known or more obvious of where your dogs must be on-leash.

Tom Campbell, 15109 Glendale Road, Minnetonka. It is a community out there for dogs and for people to gather. He liked the idea of a fence on the east side to kind of buffer the walking trail. As dog owners, they have to do some self-policing. He has encountered people breaking the rules and didn't do anything, but he is going to start doing that now.

Richard Thompson, 5220 Lee Way, Minnetonka. He personally logged about 500 hours in the park last year. It showed on his iPhone that he has about 9,000 steps per day. In 2023, he didn't see any incidents in the dog park area and he walks every day. He thinks they do a fairly good job of policing themselves. People who come into town often ask him what the rules are and he explains the rules to them. The signs at the park are vague and fairly unclear. We would have a lot more success if there were better fencing, especially on the east side, and better signage. Those people who come into town are also supporting our community businesses because they ask where they can eat or where the local brew pub is. A really important thing that people aren't realizing is our community is being supported by people who are coming here from different cities. He's talked to a lot of people who didn't know the park rules. Regular park users should be the eyes and ears of the park by sharing the park rules with people who are unaware.

Kathleen Totushek, 18301 Covington Road, Minnetonka. She lives a block away and growing up this was her neighbor's farm (the Huber's) that became Purgatory Park. She happened to know that five acres were donated to the city by Christine Reily a number of years ago; she had two Bernese mountain dogs and the reason she donated the land

was for the dogs. She is interested to know the original purchase of Huber's farm and she believes it was from Mezzenga. Back in the 1980's, the city wanted to make that into a golf course and at one time you wanted to put a road through it but these ideas were shot down because people want that area. All the animals are gone now, they used to have owls nesting there and they are no longer there. The hills are being mowed down and she realizes you have to do something about the buckthorn but she wonders why you can't just leave the park alone.

Greg Rossi, 17925 Minnetonka Boulevard, Minnetonka. He moved here from Illinois in 1991 and he had a three year old son at that time. He used to go to the park with his dog and his three year old son and they were raised in that park. There was never an incident with his infant son and all the dogs that were there. The types of people who take their animals to that park are the type that are involved and they love their dogs. They go through a lot of training to have their dogs be direct and listen to what they say. He understands all the situations and that sometimes someone can look at a dog and maybe say they are afraid of dogs and don't want to be around dogs. There is always the opportunity for that person to stay on the path and not go where the dogs are. He has never seen anything in the length of time he has lived here where dogs have done anything with anyone.

Ed Wons, 6016 Pinewood Lane, Minnetonka. He is a therapy dog team with his dog Truman and he wanted to speak on why this park is so important to them. He can walk his dog on a leash for five miles and that doesn't quite do it for him; he really does need to run. Before they go to a therapy dog session, he takes him to Purgatory Park and they toss the ball around for about a half hour. They usually will go there for a couple of hours before they go to wherever they are going and it's really important to them. Some of Ingraham's comments were on point. He thinks as dog owners, they probably need to police themselves better. He's heard people say, "Fluffy, Fluffy, Fluffy" and Fluffy doesn't pay any attention to them. It's a privilege to him to be able to take his dog off-leash but with that privilege comes responsibility of following the ordinance. He thinks clarifying the ordinance, better education and maybe better policing by them would go a long way.

Wendy Holland, 5537 County Road 101, Minnetonka. She has been in Minnetonka for five years. This meeting alone has brought awareness to herself. She is guilty of being one of those people who lets her dogs out when they pull into the parking lot. Both of her dogs are incredibly excited just coming down the road into the parking lot that she opens the doors and out they go. She will now make sure they are on their leashes and wait until they are on the trail to let them run. She didn't know that was of concern because she hasn't ever seen it be a problem. She walks there all the time and she personally has never seen any dogs cross over to the sidewalk. She can see where a fence would be beneficial on the east side. Her first dog was a Pekingese and he had back surgery and his back legs had to be in a harness. He was a very happy dog that liked to walk but she had to help him. They couldn't go in the middle off-leash area because she couldn't have other dogs play with him. They walked on the outside, which was beautiful and she could control him and the other dogs were on leashes. People who walk their dogs on the leashed side have their reasons for being there. She hoped that people who are making major decisions about this are dog lovers or dog people themselves. She thinks people's fears of dogs have more to do with those people rather than the actual dogs. Just like, she doesn't recommend how to parent because she doesn't have any children. She hopes whoever is making the decisions have a love for dogs because they become family, are beautiful animals and they are so excited to be there and play together. She

hopes you only do what is necessary and not anything beyond that for them and the dogs.

Shannon Riley, 18069 Tamarack Drive, Minnetonka. She's a 15 year resident of Minnetonka and user of Purgatory Park. She is following up on a woman who spoke earlier who mentioned that she knew the people who donated land to the park. Her understanding was that there are covenants that run with the land that was donated to the city. She would like an opportunity to review the titles that go with the land and those covenants. Her understanding is that the city has tried to enforce the leash rules before and they basically have a choice to either let the dogs run free unrestricted or they lose the land.

O'Dea said staff would have to do some research on those items.

Karen Hansen, 17001 Stodola Road, Minnetonka. She has lived there for 24 years and lives on the property that her father-in-law built. Since 1970, they have lived on Stodola Road and they use that park at least twice a day. She religiously leashes her dogs while walking on the ridge of the park because her neighbors requested that. Every time she crosses a paved or gravel path, she leashes her dogs. We have a memorial bench in the park for her son. She calls it Mezzenga hill but she doesn't know if that is really what the name of the hill is. They have a memorial bench on the hill and they have a note from the bench box. Some people have seen that bench to memorialize her son. It has been actually a really beautiful, sacred and healing experience. Not only for herself but for many people who write in this journal about how this park has been so healing for them.

They have planted two trees in the park and that money has gone to promote the park. She would find it absolutely devastating if the south end of the park would not give her access to walk up to her son's bench. She got a rescue dog during COVID who has been very challenging. Some of the people in this room have helped her train her dog who is a difficult, reactive dog that she didn't know how to deal with. The park has saved her dog and going in the off-leash area of the park has been so healing for her dog. If her dog is on a leash, she goes crazy until she walks her on the ridge in her backyard. She requested that you consider how this really is part of our community and how the people use the park. Today, she walked in the south end of the park and she only saw one person, nobody is there. Almost everyone there has dogs and they are respectful and kind, and it really develops community for us in Minnetonka.

Kim McNiff, 6825 West 192<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Eden Prairie. Her family moved to the suburbs two and a half years ago and she has three kids ages 6, 8 and 2. They have a rescue dog that they got during COVID. Her name is Penny and she is a Jack Russell terrier in a Lab color, so imagine her confusion when this really adorable yellow dog had a tremendous amount of energy. We quickly learned that she needed to run off-leash. She is the sweetest dog but she has to get out and Purgatory Park is her happy place. Many of people here have probably met her dog, she literally runs with a smile on her face the entire time she is at Purgatory Park. She runs as fast as she can with all of her friends and she is just elated. Not only has it been Penny's happy place but it has been her children's. She takes her children there all the time and they walk together, play in the sand, and they take off their shoes and get muddy. They catch crickets and snakes, and they play with the other dogs in the park. It has really been a sanctuary for her entire family.

Greg Johnson, 18810 Kingswood Terrace, Minnetonka. He has been going there for 10 years with his dogs and they love it. He echoes everybody's sentiment out there. It seems like we have a lot of folks here who want to keep things the way they are. The PowerPoint they saw about the surveys taken didn't show how many respondents there were. He thought maybe a lot of people here might've not had the opportunity to take the survey. He wondered how many people who use the park often didn't know about the survey. Did you have a representative sample enough to base your decisions on when making a major change? He's concerned that there wasn't a large enough sample. He would love to have the actual survey published so you can say how many people took the survey. He uses the park every day and he heard about the survey by word of mouth and then he struggled through the website to find it so he could take it. He knows of a lot of people who knew nothing about it so he is worried that there was not enough people and he thinks some of the results were skewed. There are some things that they can do better out there but the numbers don't jive with his experience as a daily user. It is hard for him to imagine that things are so dire and it's probably a fraction of what you saw there. He just wanted to say that he thinks the survey could've been a much broader survey and something that you push out to the audience rather than having people fight to find it.

Karen Hroma, 5910 Creek Point, Minnetonka. The pink area on the map is designated as the temporary off-leash area, but she wondered if all the other trails along the creek and by some of the ridges are being proposed not to be off-leash in the short-term.

Kumka said this figure for discussion purposes has the pink area as the off-leash area.

Hroma questioned if everything else would be off limits.

Kumka responded if this figure was recommended.

Hroma was very nervous to talk and she wanted to wait until the end, but she knows a lot of the people here and she thought everyone would be talking about this. She wanted to start with talking about those areas not designated in the pink. She goes to the pink area sometimes to meet with her community because it is a great gathering place and a good place for a lot of dogs. However, she spends about 95 percent of her time outside of that pink area. She believes keeping just that pink area creates more of what we can consider a traditional fenced-in area and that doesn't work for a dog like hers. Her dog Kylo, is a short-haired German pointer and he could almost care less about people or dogs; occasionally he will play with some dogs but for the most part he wants to be on the trails sniffing the grasses. She is hugely disappointed that this is even proposed because she doesn't think this works for the vast majority of the people in this room. She wanted to make sure they understood this as they make their comments. She agrees with a lot of the things that were said earlier. This is such a community and she's met people that she couldn't have known otherwise. She wanted to reiterate people being unsafe. She would love to see incidents, facts for example from people saying they were accosted. When she was on the walking on the trail with her friends, there were 20 high school cross-country runners and her nose felt accosted by what she smelled. That can mean a lot of different things so she really wants to move forward with facts. After reading the notes, listening to some of the board members, and especially just seeing this pink area, it really feels like there is some bias amongst the members. This is a small part of the overall project, but really the most contentious piece in probably the area that needs to have the most time spent. What she would love to see is a sub-



committee of stakeholders that are truly there all the time. Those on all sides, people that live on the east side, those that walk their dogs daily, or those who walk the perimeter. She thinks getting those people who really use it every day together in the same room to talk about solutions, would be much better than what has been proposed. She believes everything should stay the same just with better education. If that doesn't work, she would be open to have a paid permit with required training. The training doesn't have to be significant. It could be something as simple as watching a five minute video that talks about how to get your dog into the park safely, which trails are for off-leash dogs and trails where they need to be leashed. The few incidents as minor as they are, she believes are from people who just don't know the rules and aren't daily users. Just the education piece could go far.

Rick Leighton, 6379 Chatham Way, Eden Prairie. He has been going to this park since 1995 and has probably missed going only 30 days; he is on his fourth golden retriever. Your treasure, your gem is actually everything south of that bridge off Stodola Road and west up into the hills. There are different kinds of people who come to the park. There are the coffee drinkers, and there are a lot of people who gather in the pink area who just socialize and it's a beautiful thing. He's gone in that area many times but if you look at the marsh area along the creek, to the west of that, that is a beautiful spot to take your dog off-leash during the various times of the year. The dangerous areas are on the east side of your pink area from the parking lot down to near where it comes to the south bridge. The area described by everybody here is where he goes for his morning wake up. He just retired after 44 years and that is his wake up spot with his dog. He had a heart attack in 2015 and this is where he gets his hills in for his workout. Plus, he meets some of the best people that you have in this town, who essentially all get along. At the lake with a fenced-in dog park is in fact where he finds the worst dog behaviors because you have people who don't really want to take the time. The shocking thing about this is you are talking about this being the only off-leash area when in fact you could almost make a fence along one side of it and you will protect the people. His wife goes on Nextdoor and talks about things at Purgatory Park and he has only had three incidents since 1995 of somebody being uncomfortable. As a former attorney, everything reminds him of an association meeting.

Garrett Gardner, 2953 Fairchild Avenue, Minnetonka. He has been going there for about 25 years with a couple of dogs that weigh about 25 pounds between the two of them. They've never had a problem with any dog and if there would, it would be them. They socialize and it is a community there. There is a gal here that could name every dog there. He noticed that there is a lot of grey hairs in the crowd, and people should realize that some people can't really walk the dog the amount that the dog needs. If they would have them on a leash and walk around for a little bit, the poor dog would wonder what they are doing. To put them all in this small area might start to create the problems that you are talking about. It is nice to walk there but if you do this, he wonders who would go there. Most people have dogs there so it appears to him that it seems to be a solution in search of a problem.

Jennifer Johnson, 18810 Kingswood Terrace, Minnetonka. She agrees with everything that people have said about the community and the importance of the park, and also the importance for the dogs who are part of our families. She is concerned as well about all of those trails which are not maintained trails. As part of the city ordinance, those are all supposed to be available for off-leash dogs and she is concerned with when this temporary solution is going to take place and when is it going to stop. She feels like once

you have told somebody they can't go someplace anymore, it's easy for it to just go away permanently. She is wondering what it would take to change the city ordinance that talks about all of the parks in Minnetonka and it says where there are unmaintained trails, dogs can be off-leash. If you need to change that ordinance to reflect, except in Purgatory Park that is not the case anymore. The city ordinance would have to be specific to Purgatory Park taking it apart from all the other parks where the unmaintained trails are supposed to be available for off-leash use. She is also very concerned with where the land came from to begin with, and taking a look at those titles or deeds to understand what was the purpose. She has heard from a number of people, not just here tonight that the original purpose of land donation was to leave it for the dogs. She would like to find out more about that and understand how that would impact changes we are even considering.

Beth Harries, 3527 County Road 101, Minnetonka. One thing she wanted to urge you to consider is to really think about what the long-term plan is because a lot of them have been going to the park for a long time. Her dogs love it and they have the best time, but demand is growing and our population is growing. Across from where she lives, they have 26 additional units coming up. She feels like we already have people mentioning COVID dogs and she feels like we shouldn't be restricting this amenity, but thinking about how to grow this amenity because it is great and they love it so much. When they leave Purgatory Park in particular, they are probably going to Dukes which is a dog-friendly restaurant, or stopping at Chuck and Don's to get dog treats, or they are going to UnMapped to get a beer. She feels like we should think about how to become a destination for dog lovers and have this wonderful amenity instead of constricting them to this little area. In last month's meeting minutes, she read a couple comments about dogs spreading buckthorn and she actually doesn't think they do because the berries and seeds are poisonous to dogs so they don't eat them. However, the birds eat the berries and spread it. A lot of the issues that have already been brought up is at the junction points where the off-leash meets the on-leash. It is when you get to the park and when you are crossing the water. It would go a long way and reduce the incidents that you talked about if you could provide an alternative area to get to the dog park or to cross the water where you aren't joining the on-leash and off-leashed dogs.

Dan Wingert, 5420 Spring Lane, Minnetonka. He has lived there for five years. He is an emergency veterinarian so he hears about dog attacks. When we talk to owners, most of the dog attacks are actually like house mates. The number one most common dog attack wounds are actually house mates. Of course you have the ones where a dog is being walked on a leash and it's a dog problem where maybe a dog runs up and breaks off its leash or off its tie out and attacks the dog. When you have a fenced-in dog park, you have a smaller area with dogs and there is more resource guarding there so you are going to have higher incidents of dog attacks in that area. In addition, if you fence that area in, there will be more dogs there. He heard snickering comments about how this is a preserve and if you want to lose a preserve, that is how to do it right there. If you fence in that small area and all the dogs will be right there, it is going to become a feedlot. It is just going to be dirt, mud and feces, and you are going to transmit more diseases that way, instead of having dogs spread out over this entire area. Infectious diseases spread out when you have confined spaces. When we talk about kennel cough or bordetella, we ask owners if they went to a dog park. If they say yes, then we ask them what dog park because they want to know if another dog comes in with a cough, if they went to the same dog park, because it could be the same infectious disease. He has yet to hear one case from Purgatory Park. Generally if they get fenced into a smaller area, they are likely

going to have an incident of passing infectious diseases than in a more spread out area. He heard in some comment from before that wildlife diseases and off-leash dogs can transmit diseases back and forth like rabies and distemper. He's been a vet for eight years and he is emergency in a specialty hospital, one of three in Minnesota. We haven't even had one case of where they are even concerned about rabies and he has the latest polished study. The only case of rabies in dogs in 2020 was one for the entire year. The other thing is that they have vaccines for rabies and distemper and if your dog is not vaccinated, they shouldn't be out here anyways. That really should not be a concern. He can only speak about things that he knows about like dog bites and infectious diseases but this is going to make things worse. In the terms of dog attacks, dog wounds, infectious diseases, and also soil conservation, that is going to tear up that little lot if every dog is confined to that one space.

Andrew Jennings, 4330 Windwood Way, Minnetonka. He has been taking his dogs to Purgatory Park for the best part of 10 years on a daily basis. He has read in the minutes that dogs seem to be the cause of all problems in respect to whether this can possibly be true or not. He sees no real analysis so far as to whether what they have been blamed for has any substance to it. Someone recently mentioned that they are spreading buckthorn, which clearly they don't do. They are also eating the vegetation and if you are worried about eating vegetation, maybe you should deal with the deer population, not the dog population. He understands the comments about dogs going onto private property up in the Nantucket region in the north east corner of the park, it is unacceptable. They shouldn't do it but so far he sees no evidence and it is highly unlikely to him. The dog's off-leash up there were being exercised off-leash in the central area of the park. It is almost certainly people who are not leashing their dogs while exercising them on the maintained trail, which goes right past that property. Anybody bringing their dog into the off-leash area is considerable distance from those properties and the dogs would have to go through some of the densest undergrowth you've got out there. He doesn't see it happening. Nearly all the dogs are way to the south and west of those properties. He questioned if anybody has done any analysis to where these dogs are coming from. He thinks you need to do that before you come to a solution that doesn't affect the problem. Putting a fence down the east side would not influence that situation at all because the dogs are already on the outside of it. Before you go any further, you need to carefully examine the issue. The dogs have been accused of causing erosion in the park, but the dogs aren't causing erosion, we are. To be quite frank, dogs do not dig up these big mud patches that are around, that is from people congregating there. He thinks the dogs do very little damage to the park. If you want to restore the park to its original state, you are going to have to eliminate the people first; anything else is going to have little or no impact.

Eric Moreira, 5554 Nantucket Place, Minnetonka. Lives at one of the properties that backs up to the park. Some people here probably know him because he has walked his dog there from 2006-2018 in the off-leash areas all the way in the back part. He now has a dog that is on-leash like Ingraham was talking about. He has had many instances when walking out there. They have cataloged in a month for approximately one hour a day about 63 occurrences of an off-leash dog on the maintained trail. It's not an incident and nobody got hurt, but at the same time, if you have an ordinance in which law enforcement can't enforce, then it is up to the people to make sure their dogs don't interact with people on the main trail. If you look back at the February meeting in 2023, Community Service Officer Deeann Bloom came in and spoke at length about the issues they have with enforcing these things. The back part they are talking about is very nice

and he does walk there without his dog. He can't take his dog there but it is very nice to walk and he walks back there with his nine year old. This is a great park everybody obviously loves it. He understands about the dog park thing as well. When you have a fence, it does turn into a feedlot like the other person mentioned. His dog is reactive but he just keeps walking. There has been plenty of times where he goes out there and like someone mentioned earlier, he hears, "Fluffy, Fluffy" and you know that Fluffy isn't listening. That's not a big deal but he gets that there are people who do think it is a big deal because they go up to them. His daughter has been jumped on by a dog and she is perfectly fine, but they are also dog people. This came up back in 2008 and he was at that meeting as well and thinks something needs to be addressed mostly from an ordinance standpoint. Don't take away everything from people but make it so the community service officers can actually do their job correctly.

Cory Miller, 3527 County Road 101, Minnetonka. Questioned how many total parks or outdoor sanctioned areas there are in Minnetonka. Let's just say we have 50. So there is one park, and one area that they can bring their dogs to be off-leash. He finds it unbelievable that they are even having a meeting and talking about abolishing the one park that they can take their dog's off-leash because a certain segment of people feel uncomfortable about it. They have 49 other parks to go to if they feel uncomfortable but they don't have anywhere else to go so he finds it ridiculous that we are introducing this small zone for off-leash when this is their only place they can go. The point of city hall is to represent the majority of people using the resources. To him, he doesn't see anyone here that has said anything dissenting or advocating about negative reasons for the off-leash dog park. He hopes city hall is listening and seeing the representation and the majority voicing their opinions about how strongly they feel about having an off-leash area because everyone else has 49 other parks to go to, but they don't.

Ingraham mentioned that our ordinance is such that you can go to any park in Minnetonka with unmaintained areas with your dog off-leash. You can go to Lone Lake Park, Big Willow Park or any other park where there is unmaintained areas and dogs can be off-leash but not on maintained park areas like athletic fields. Purgatory Park is not the only place you can take your dog.

Pamela Layton, 5538 Nantucket Place, Minnetonka. She is one of the people who has dogs in her yard from the center section, typically. They come out of the area where we are hearing this idea that a dog is under voice control. She loves dogs and she thinks it's kind of comical about a dog who sees a rabbit or hears another dog, and there is someone not paying a great amount of attention and that dog takes off when there is something of interest outside that zone. They have a lot of bird feeders and wildlife in their yard and dogs are in her yard three to five times a week and to her, that is significant. Regarding the comment made that people can go to other parks; she has lived there for 33 years and Purgatory Park is her park too. She is pretty passionate about that. As the number of dogs has increased, they have seen no pheasants, foxes, otters, salamanders, possums and brown thrashers. A lot of information she heard tonight is new to her. She feels like we are working very hard to restore this park and if we are going to allow it to become a dog park, then she wondered why are we spending time doing that. She questioned why all these people are working so hard on something that won't be able to be maintained over time. People have been asked whether or not they want it. When you say that you are the majority, she considers herself to be part of a different majority.

Dane Kromer lives in Minnetonka but is a little uncomfortable giving his address right now because he probably won't be getting the applause that the other speakers have gotten but he hopes people can be respectful. During the 25 years that he and his wife have lived in Minnetonka, they have always had at least one large dog, but typically they've had two dogs, usually either German short-hairs or greyhounds. In the past five years, they've fostered over 20 retiring greyhounds and they love their dogs. However, they recognize that not everyone in our community loves our dogs as much as they do. We take our dogs on frequent walks and they are always on six foot non-retractable leashes. He believes that most dog owners in Minnetonka feel the same way as they do based on what they see in their neighborhood because they also keep their pets on a leash. Dogs do not need to be walked or run off-leash to be happy and healthy. Off-leash dogs are detrimental to habitat restoration and wildlife. Most importantly, off-leash dogs do not mix well with other park users, and in fact, they discourage many residents from using the parks. It is interesting to hear from somebody that said 99 percent of the park users are here or are off-leash dog users; that should be clear evidence that something needs to be done. You need everybody to be able to use the parks. The current situation is in direct conflict with the POST Plan mission to provide a welcoming, comprehensive and balanced system of high-quality parks. This is because off-leash dogs do not create a welcoming environment. A permanent fenced dog area at Purgatory Park or wherever staff determines it should be makes sense. He believes a portion of the area currently occupied by the informal off-leash dog park, south of the parking lot would best meet this need. Unfortunately, with regards to the leash law in Minnetonka, dog issues at Purgatory Park are not unique. If it is solved there, it will become worse elsewhere. Too many Minnetonka residents do not use our parks because they have all become off-leash parks. We frequently ride our bikes on the maintained trails through Purgatory Park because it is part of the larger loop system. They've had countless interactions with off-leash dogs. They've been attacked twice by off-leashed dogs and these attacks have resulted in injuries to their pets. Therefore, the park board also needs to recommend that the city adopts a mandatory six foot leash law throughout Minnetonka. This action would align with most other cities in our area and would reduce the number of people coming to Purgatory Park and other parks from neighboring cities to take advantage of our lax leash law.

Joe Henry, 15001 Highland Lane, Minnetonka. He wanted to bring up what the other guy was talking about, bicycles. He thinks bicycles are a bigger danger in Purgatory Park than the off-leash dogs. They are coming up that hill way too fast and the e-bikes don't take any consideration for pedestrians. He doesn't take his dog off-leash there but he's here because he sees all the good interactions that people have there and all the people he's met while having his dog on a leash. Being uncomfortable about something is not an excuse to ban it. He didn't serve in the military for nine years to go to Iraq so we can say, "I'm uncomfortable". He's uncomfortable around bicycles, should we ban them. Keep saying we can go anyplace with our dogs off-leash but everybody's congregating at this one park, let's save it.

Cindy Eyden, 16824 Excelsior Boulevard, Minnetonka. There is a large group of people here who clearly love their dogs and she sees them in the park playing a lot. She spends time doing the restoration in the park. She cares about this park a lot and she been in this park since its inception. She has seen that it also has become quite degraded by overuse. At one point, the dogs were not an issue but it has gotten to be so many dogs. Certainly, COVID was a wonderful time for people to congregate there with their dogs and she could see that. She is one of the people who is not comfortable whether that

seems like it's an OK thing or not. She is not comfortable with off-leash dogs because of her experiences. She has had dogs charge her and she has had dogs hackles up. She's had to yell at their owners to call them off and they were telling her, "oh don't worry, they are friendly" while their dog has their hackles up, their teeth bared and they are charging her. She doesn't feel safe and people are not walking on the unmaintained trails as much because there are dog's off-leash and that is exactly where she had that experience. She lives very close to Purgatory Park and it's a park she has gone to many times. She loves the nature there and somebody referred to how the wildlife is not there anymore. Dogs have a huge impact on wildlife and she is very saddened not to have the wildlife there. She thinks we need to find a balance and she would hope that we don't just give the whole park over to the dogs. It has become degraded and we are hoping to restore it. The title of this park is not the Purgatory Dog Park, the title is a Community Park and Reserve. Preserves indicate that it also is protected area for wildlife, and off-leash dogs and wildlife do not mix.

Paul Quinn Davis, 4200 Winchester Court, Minnetonka. He was thinking we can all live together and it has to be a park for everybody. He is a proponent of the dog park and he agrees with the portals on the map. We have problems with the north and the south at the bridge of the portal. He agrees with the earlier comment about expanding maybe to the off-road trails to the west along the water side. He owned a house in South Minneapolis from 1981-1996 and he used to go running south of Lake of the Isles, but you can't take your dog's there anymore. It's bike paths with fences on both sides of the rail line and then they have a really bad fenced-in dog area. It's just a plot of mud and it's a piece of junk; he would never go in there with all the filth, dog poop and dirt on his boots. He doesn't think the dogs would have a very good time. He has been coming to Purgatory Park a lot, like three to five times a week for the last year and a half since he moved back here from Los Angeles. When you are talking about the problems at this park, he doesn't see that there are undoable problems for them to get all of what they want in this park. You have a gold mine in this park and it's one of the most beautiful parks he has ever been in. He supports having dogs in the park. He questioned if there was a larger area south of the bridge in the park. He agrees that nobody should be threatened by a dog but at the same time, you are talking about the park being overrun. It's overrun in a percentage of the park, it's not the entire park being overrun. When you talk about fences, he thinks there are ways to do that with landscaping. You don't have to have a fence, but if you do, he hopes you would do a wooden fence. He has seen an alarming rise of plastic fences going up all around Minnetonka. That is a Segway to potentially another suggestion of materiality and sustainability and people using natural materials and not putting up white plastic fences everywhere. On the east side, that could be mitigated with berm or tree plantings because that is a very close area and people are kind of coming in contact with each other. He thinks his dog loving friends probably want that whole river but maybe we can have the east side of the river and somebody else can have the west side of the river so we all have places to go. He thinks it's good that you are pushing the dog areas away from the two real intersection areas at the south and the north. There should be some sort of ceremonial kind of way to enter that kind of makes it feel like a natural gateway so that they are on their leashes.

Kris Kopischke, 4528 Saddlewood Drive, Minnetonka. She doesn't think this should be banned so she is really grateful to have this opportunity to talk. She has damage to her leg and she can't run, can't run on a treadmill and she doesn't like to go to a club or anything like that. She has the opportunity to take her dogs and walk on the trails; she has met so many wonderful people there. Her specialist has said that it is really good for

her leg. She is doing this all by herself so if you take that away, she has to find another place to take her dogs. She wanted to comment on the wildlife because just last week she saw three deer. A couple of us were on what they call "owl watch" so they look and listen for where the owls are and they have seen a saw-whet owl and there are barred owls. They look for nature and they have their dogs under control so she really hopes you take that into consideration. There is so much passion here on both sides. Someone said it really well in that we are used to doing this, and if you take it away from us then you are taking them out of their routine and their dog's routine. She prays that you keep it the same and have better signage. She runs into people who come and visit because they hear it is a dog park but they don't know the rules. Help us, help them. When she interacts with people who don't have dogs, she always asks if they are ok with dogs. If they say, no, then she calls them over. She isn't trying to say she is the best at it because her dogs have selective listening but she has also seen kids out there with selective listening. She thinks we just have to weigh all of that and take it into consideration.

John Wallace, 1001 Horn Drive, Minnetonka. He has been a Minnetonka resident since 1963. He just wanted to reference some of these people talking about wildlife. First, he volunteers for the city and the restoration projects, but he also owns over 800 acres. Part of wildlife is that you have to have habitat. If you have a 20 acre park, that is not habitat, and that is why you don't have pheasants and a lot of other wildlife. If you are worried about adversity for wildlife, feral cats present a bigger threat than dogs do. He wanted to stand up and present a contrary view.

Heather Holm, 15327 Lake Shore Avenue, Minnetonka. She wanted to support some of the things that people have already said and things the park board has already discussed. She thinks one of the immediate issues is that the leash ordinance is unenforceable and that really creates a precarious situation in the park for park users. She really wants you to consider public safety as a whole when you gather and process all this feedback. She supports the short-term proposal by staff, in addition to, the temporary fence on the east side. It will really help with some of those dogs coming from the middle area onto the maintained trail. She frequently volunteers in the park and does restoration work. Today she was in the park for three hours and she observed several dogs on the main trail off-leash. She just wanted to say that it is a concern, but not necessarily for her. She absolutely loves dogs and has had a dog all her life up until three years ago. Her husband and her say they are between dogs; meaning we will eventually get another dog. In addition to the temporary fence, she really wants you to think about the existing ordinance language and what we can do in the short-term to address some of the concerns raised about safety. In addition to defining clearly what is a maintained area and not a maintained area. There has been some folks saying maintained trails but the ordinance language is maintained area. She would like to see signs posted that say, "maintained area, dogs must be leashed." This would help everybody better to find where dogs are allowed to be off-leash and where they should be leashed in the park. The really big thing to address here is public safety. She doesn't feel comfortable as a member of the community if we have a certain percentage of people who don't feel safe. She really thinks that is an immediate problem that we need to solve as a community. As a long-term restoration volunteer, she is putting in hundreds of hours into this park trying to restore the ecology and really making it a beautiful space for all park visitors to enjoy. She is really looking forward to reading the draft master plan that staff will be publishing sometime this month. She is also looking forward to that plan having a vision of a really defined trail system and clear guidelines for park visitors.

Which, will ensure that we no longer have continued environmental degradation, we have really defined ways and rules of how we expect people to come to the park, visit the park, and enjoy the park without impacting the natural resources. She firmly believes they can do both. She wants people to be in the park enjoying it but she doesn't want to put in so much time as a volunteer if our efforts were end game.

Maryna Chowhan, 4509 Woodhill Road, Minnetonka. She has been a resident of Minnetonka for about 25 years or more. This park is important for both residents and dog residents. What we need to consider as a short-term concept maybe is even shorter term by putting up signs. The people that she meets at Purgatory Park monitors themselves. If somebody's dog is not behaving, people will comment and kind of make sure they behave. If your dog isn't fixed, you are told you shouldn't be here because your dog isn't fixed. Put up signs so people who enter that park know where they should have their dog leashed and where they shouldn't. Put up signs at the entrances and exits and then couple times around where the path is paved. Put up signs and give people the benefit of the doubt. If they know what they should be doing, they will do it.

Tim Bjella, 2115 Morton Road, Minnetonka. He has been a resident of Minnetonka and has been walking his dogs for 30 years here. Purgatory Park is a treasure and there is nothing like it in all of Minnesota. If you go to the rest of the country, it is hard to find something that is even comparable to this. What he is hearing from people here isn't that they don't want to restrict this park, they want to open up more parks and have more dog access, not less. They don't want to be restricted more, they want to have places where they can run their dogs because they need to run and play with other dogs. It is getting narrower and narrower every year where they can do that. Having been there for 30 years, he hasn't seen degradation of the park that some people have claimed and that we are losing wildlife. They don't appear to be losing vegetation and they have a little bit more erosion. They would like to see less restrictions and more parks for the dog lovers and everybody else. If there are a few people who are uncomfortable, he gets that, but we can't please everybody and make everything happen for people. We have 49 other parks that people can go to. Let's make a few more like Purgatory Park.

Pete Brown, 5023 Mayview Road, Minnetonka. He agrees with most of the comments from people here. He recently retired a year ago October and his retirement present was two dogs. He is 69 years old and going to be 70 and these dogs get him out of the house in the winter time. It is a gem but he also wants to be devil's advocate for the people who live there too. He is sure these people on the east side have had many troubles. They are there for a couple of hours a day, two or three days a week, and these people live there so he is sure they have seen it. A compromise seems to be that fence along the east side. His dog goes to the creek and walks up and down it the whole way. If he can't get to the creek, what other park is there like that? Please leave the park alone. Somebody mentioned a fee and he paid money for Three Rivers at Eden Prairie and he goes there. His dogs are ok inside a fenced park but he likes it better at the other one. Have a fee for the conservation people, the volunteers, to help them buy more trees, seeds or whatever they need. Put a fee there because he would pay it to do that because this is a gem and one of the only two that he knows of. He'll go to Lone Lake Park or the other one on Minnetonka Boulevard and see if there are off-road trails for dogs that aren't maintained but he doesn't really know what other parks there are. He has met a community there; their dogs sniff each other and play, and the owners talk and move on. He has never seen a fight there but he is sure there has been some because dogs do fight. His dog has chased deer and he had to run after them, but he



scolded them and put them on a leash so they know they can't be doing that. It is the owner's problem and not the dog's. Please don't penalize our dogs for what they aren't doing right. He also hopes you don't mind if he sees you when your dog is off-leash on a paved place because he will start talking, please yell at him too if he is out of line. We will do our part, please leave the park alone.

Melanie Wolfe, 5739 Eden Prairie Road, Minnetonka. She has been a Minnetonka resident pretty much her whole life and is at Purgatory Park every day with her dog. She has a pitbull mix and she is really proud that she can be a breed advocate. She can bring him there, he is well trained and she put a ton of work into him. She absolutely loves Purgatory Park. She asked to review the stats because for her, it looked like it was about 50/50 in that the true majority of the survey says that most people feel safe. She wondered why the short-term concept is to restrict the dog's freedom to run around off-leash if the majority feels safe. She thinks the sample size is important but we are 50/50 saying the off-leash park rules should not change. Another slide mentioned things that discourage park usage and off-leash dogs was listed but 53 percent feel comfortable with that. She wondered why the short-term plan has restrictions. She thinks the solution would be education and better signage. It's also important to remember that when we are going to a park, whether it is with kids or with dogs, there is inherent risk with everything. If you are going into an off-leash area, you should know that and know that there is risk in that. Dogs are like kids and they are not perfect either. Hopefully the owners can take responsibility for that. She supports no changes.

Robert Bodeau has become a huge fan of Purgatory Park and the dogs. He spent most of his career as an attorney for one of the big companies in town and it was a wonderful career but he had to spend 30 years with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). MS as you may or may not know is a demyelinating disease that causes your brain to misfire and it is a nasty disease. In any event, that has forced him out of the practice of law, in fact, it forced him out of any sort of work. That kind of forced him to spend time with his dog. He spent time walking his dog at Purgatory Park and they would walk and go down to the creek. After a while, he came to the belief that most of the other people walking at the park were almost always trying to figure something out in their life. It wasn't always disease but he has met tons of people that have been diagnosed with some terrible disease. They are out walking their dog or maybe not walking their dog, but they are just trying to figure out that they have this disease and what the next step is. People use Purgatory Park for that and he would caution you to not do anything that would hurt that aspect of the park. He would also caution you not to do anything that would hurt other positive aspects of the park. Before he chose Purgatory Park as a place to walk, they did an informal survey of all the parks in Minnetonka. They literally went to Big Willow Park for a week to see what kind of people go there. They did the same thing with Lone Lake Park and they learned that park has the most traffic. Go to Lone Lake Park if you want to meet people, don't go there if you want to be alone.

Steve Schmirler, 5215 Forest Road, Minnetonka. He came in here thinking that there are no changes that should be made to the park. However, after hearing all the ideas that have come up through this session, there are a number of stellar ideas. For example, having a video training or putting up landscaping on the east side, that would make a big difference. He agrees with the rest.

Walick closed public input.

Walick commented that we've heard a lot of passionate comments and he thanked everyone who came up and spoke. You had a lot of great things to say and a lot of great information. He was taking notes as people were speaking to respect everything you had said. One of the big things that stood out for him is the sense of community amongst you. We aren't making any decisions tonight regarding ordinances, rules to the park, or leash laws but this is just to give city staff more information as they put together the Purgatory Park Master Plan. That is definitely something that should be considered as we move on.

Hanley feels like she needs to process this. She thought it was interesting hearing comments about fenced dog parks and how there is increased negative dog interactions and it makes dogs stressed. Also, that the poorly behaved dogs go to those places. She doesn't know what the whole story is, however, all the surrounding cities have fenced dog parks.

Jacobs said we are lucky we are in Minnetonka because of everyone that came tonight and he appreciated their feedback. Based on a lot of passionate feedback, it is clear that this area might not be enough or might not be sufficient. He thinks we need to establish much better signage first. As he looks at the short-term recommendations, we need to figure out what it means and what does voice control mean. We need to establish clear signage for the park and decide if this is our off-leash park. Saying that people shouldn't come here doesn't work for him because our parks are for everybody. However, if you say this is officially our off-leash dog park, it gives people the option to decide; it doesn't displace anyone that we don't want them there. With respect to the people who live there, he doesn't know if a fence is the right idea to go, that is more of a longer term. First step is recommending that we have stronger signage, we have a training of some sort, encourage dog owners who are there to spread the knowledge and enforce the park themselves, and police that. He thinks they can and he thinks they are right. He believes that most of the people here are responsible dog owners. Three years ago, the park board was on a park tour and a guy walked by them with his dog next to him on the leash. Two minutes later the dog went sprinting back the other way not on the leash, then 10 minutes later the guy came by and asked them if they have seen his dog. That guy is not here tonight but he might be the one percent that is causing an issue. He suggests making it really clear that this is our off-leash dog park, having stronger signs saying where the off-leash area ends, and having people monitor the park and telling others that their dog is out of line and what they need to do. Also, having a defined area that says where it begins so that dogs are not loose in the parking lot. He thinks they should recommend all of those things but also continue to explore. This is obviously a well-valued park for dogs for what it is and he doesn't think we need to change it. With that being said, we have to have some laws to abide by because right now they are not clear enough. Putting a leash on your dog does not make it a good dog. He has a reactive dog because when his dog was a 10 week old puppy, he was attacked while he was on a leash by a dog not on a leash so it doesn't make him safe because he was on a leash. When his daughter was two, she was knocked down by a dog, it wasn't her fault and they were on a trail. Having a clearer sense of rules and what they mean and having people who really abide by the rules is important. They've heard some negative feedback where people don't think the rules apply to them. Some people assume that when you see the people who live on the park without a dog, that they hate dogs but they actually have a dog and they are just saying please do not let your dog's run through their yard. He appreciates all the feedback and thinks some of the ideas were great and he really likes them.

Hanley was uncertain whether it's possible to spend a lot of time and money restoring habitat with people and dogs walking through that restored area. There would at a very minimum need to be some areas that were off-limits so that they can regenerate and the new plants can grow. Or else, we should just abandon Purgatory Park completely and not do any restoration. She's not sure if that is the right answer though.

Jacobs said one of the points somewhere in here was identifying areas that need restoration. He thinks they all want the park to look beautiful. He questioned how they could find areas that meshes restoring areas that need restoration with having dogs around. He asked if signs could be put up saying something like that area is under restoration and we need to keep the dogs out of here right now. Then to also have people respect that. Without trying it, we don't know and without any rules or restrictions, we also don't know.

Hanley added that if there isn't some maintenance done that it will be nothing but buckthorn in 15 years.

Ingraham stated he has made a lot of comments in the earlier meetings but he will repeat a couple of them here for the folks who weren't at those. He has been passionate about Purgatory Park and has spent a lot of time there. It's interesting that there was 20 percent who showed up in the city survey that felt uncomfortable and then 40 percent showed up on the survey for Purgatory Park. For those interested in all those materials, they are online. The POST Plan study is online and the respondent levels, all that stuff is online for the city so you can access it. He thinks the conflict area is always for people on the maintained trails. When he had the nonreactive dogs and took them into the center section, you don't see conflict amongst the dogs when they are running loose in that area. Dogs are being dogs and there might be a little scuffle but he has never experienced or seen anything. What you see are the examples from the people who live on Nantucket, who clearly have dogs from the center crossing over the path and going through their yards. Someone off Stodola mentioned her experience with her neighbor's dog being off-leash and running into her backyard and into her house, chasing her dog and attacking her and her dog; there was a police report filed. Things do happen but it is dogs being in the areas they are not supposed to be in. It's not that the dogs are fighting where they can be, it's when they intercept. He likes the idea of a barrier particularly in that bottom third of the pink area, where the maintained trail and the informal trail in the center are really close. It's unacceptable to think your dog isn't going to go that 20 feet up onto that little trail if a dog is there. When you exit the bottom of the area to cross the creek, to go up the hill is another area where a lot of times people may not leash their dog to go up the hill and you get an intersection there. Personally, having a reactive dog, where they had to restrict themselves to the exterior perimeter was where he experienced people walking their dogs' off-leash and telling him not to worry because their dog is friendly. His dog isn't friendly, so they should worry. People also don't care if you tell them that it is a \$130 ticket, they just say they will pay it. That is the kind of stuff that he experienced and he's sure he isn't the only one. In the center, you may not hear that but there are people walking their dogs' off-leash on that perimeter trail where they are not supposed and they are being disrespectful to other residents and our community service officers. That is a problem to him. His favorite part of the park is the area south of the ridge, and from the ridge down. It is the green area on the big map that has all the informal trails, the ridge, and the woods that doesn't really show up on the map because it is just off the bottom. He doesn't really agree with that being not available because

most of the people in that area are expecting dogs to be off-leash and you aren't really running into packs of dogs. Dogs tend to be running, sniffing and exploring and it is a great area and it's the most unique part of the park to him. He respects the sense of community of all the people who go because they are like members who meet there regularly. He used to know a lot of the dogs who went there but many of them have since moved on. The plan that is laid out is trying to strike that balance with having people feel safe in the park but also having people be able to exercise their dogs. Hopefully we can come up with a solution that people can respect. The most critical thing is the ordinance and how it is written. It really needs to be clarified, otherwise, the way it is written now, you can kind of do anything you want as long as you aren't in the maintained space. Holm brought up an interesting point that the actual ordinance doesn't say maintained trails, it says maintained areas. If it does say maintained areas, then it is even more of a grey area because we have a lot of areas that are off-leash or undeveloped that are actually being maintained for restoration purposes.

Beyersdorf appreciated hearing everybody's stories and she understands how passionate everyone is. She has grown up with dogs her whole life so she gets it. She doesn't personally have dogs but she understands what it is like to live with people who love dogs. She has always taught her kids that we should look at all sides of an issue. We don't just look at it from our perspective, so she hopes that everybody here tries to have the ability to look at it from the other side when they can. She really agrees that we need to make better signs for the park. Not only should there be clearer signs, but there should also be more signs in all areas of the park. She really appreciates hearing from dog owners saying that they will be better at policing their own dogs and policing other dog owners and taking responsibility. Personal responsibility is at the center of this as everybody needs to be taking ownership of this. If you care that much about your dogs, and you care this much about this park, than everybody should be taking part in figuring out how to come up with a solution for it. We are representatives of the city but we don't make the final decisions. They are given input from the city staff and they really appreciate their hard work on this issue. We will take everybody's information into consideration and they will take that back and create their revised draft for us to look at. Hearing everybody's side of this has been really enlightening and she really appreciates hearing what everybody had to say.

Kumka thanked everyone so much. He is hearing some very clear feedback about signage and suggesting in the draft master plan that we review the ordinance more closely. He also would like to get your feedback on sort of the inverse of this figure for the draft master plan. He would like to know where signage would relate to known areas of conflict and where we would potentially want to make it clear to folks that dogs are discouraged to be off-leashed in these areas. Highlighting the key trails, the parking areas, some of these sort of known potential tension areas. Rather than just this discreet blob, he was hearing that the southern part of the park was so wonderful. Rather than having two blobs, sort of an inverse of this figure that would highlight sort of the discreet tension areas that leashing would be required, something to that effect.

Beyersdorf said if she understands Kumka correctly, instead of our signage saying, "this is an off-leash area" saying, "this is where your dog needs to be on a leash". Then it tells people that their dog needs to be on a leash from the parking lot to the off-leash area. Then around the park you would have other signs that say, "This is an on-leash area" and it would make it very clear.

Kumka said that is what he is suggesting for this draft master plan.

Ingraham mentioned that signage at Meadow Park came up at their last meeting and that person sent them a picture. One interesting thing is if you look at the beige signs like when you exit the parking lot to go in, it talks about maintained/unmaintained. It is really referring to that part in the center, it's not referring to the trail because it implies the trail because it talks about maintained areas. If you look at Meadow Park, it is part of the loop corridor system, which he thinks the perimeter of Purgatory Park might be part of. That sign is really clear. It says, "On the trail, you have to have your dog on a six foot leash or less." Those kinds of signs might be useful to have around the perimeter because it not only would be enforced for people using the perimeter but for people on the center moving out. In a sense, you almost have in addition to having more signs but signs that kind of specify what the trail rules are and what is the possible interior rules.

Beyersdorf commented that it is basically saying that you are now entering an on-leash area, you must now put your dog on a leash.

Ingraham replied yes, because you are on the maintained trails.

Kumka commented that the signage out there is sorely outdated, and the trail mapping is looking pretty homely these days. That is going to be addressed so this would give us an opportunity to have more thoughtful, tasteful and appropriate signs related to all nature park use, not just the dogs.

Beyersdorf thought by looking at the map that there were four signs. There are two signs at each entrance but she thinks you need more signs.

Ingraham said there are more signs around the perimeter right now. There are about eight signs that he can think of that are around the perimeter. There are signs at Stodola which is a classic example because you naturally want to let your dog off-leash there, especially if you are going to go up the hill into the back. It is ambiguous at times and he comes back to the fact that our ordinance is very difficult to interpret.

Hanley said one interesting suggestion was to have a stakeholder group to see if they could come up with some other solutions. Is there time for that?

Kumka said it's not likely in advance of the draft master plan. We did talk about an overall city dog strategy. It says dog park strategy but perhaps a sub-committee of dog advocates could be part of a process related to the broader application of an updated ordinance or dog's throughout the system. That could be a result of the draft master plan.

Hanley said maybe a group of dog advocates, restoration community, plus people who are a little dog phobic so we are trying to include everybody instead of segments.

Jacobs echoed that idea. It's kind of like the mountain bike trail has trail bosses and some people who are willing to work with the restoration and make sure their interests are hear. He also suggested researching to see if there was a covenant or anything originally with the land document.

Kumka inquired early on with the city right-of-way and property coordinator related to the Riley parcel that was donated to the city in 2011. She informed me that there are no land use restrictions on the deed or within the council report related to the donation of that land. That is the Riley property and not the former Mezzenga property. He doesn't have any documents related to that parcel at this point.

Hanley asked if the Riley property was marked on any of the maps that they received.

Ingraham said it is in the south area.

Kumka said it's not marked on any of the maps because it is part of the park. It is south of the map and south of the oak ridge. There is still an asphalt driveway that enters the park there.

Jacobs requested looking into the Mezzenga property.

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

Beyersdorf reminded everyone about the winter farmer's market this Saturday, February 10.

Ingraham was down by what he calls the city loop which is by the water treatment plant, it's where the trail goes to the creek. The interpretation signs there are really good.

Natural Resources Manager Leslie Yetka said those are new signs.

Ingraham said they are really good signs and it made him curious if there was an update on when the Lone Lake signs are going in.

Yetka responded that the signs you saw there were signs that we started to develop for Lone Lake. We were coordinating somewhat with the Friends of Lone Lake Park. One of the things that came out of that was a desire to wait until that park gets master planned. If you recall in the CIP, the large community parks will go through a master planning process, much like Purgatory Park. We don't anticipate that they will be as complicated as Purgatory Park. When Lone Lake comes, she thinks it is in 2025 or 2026. That will be the best time to look at interpretive signs or interpretive features. It is a little bit on hold.

Ingraham wanted to compliment the level of restoration again between the volunteers, city staff and contractors. Purgatory Park is hugely changed. Big Willow and Hilloway Parks look great and there is just a lot of good work and he wanted to compliment everyone. The ridge in Purgatory Park now has been sort of overhauled. If you haven't been to Wood-Rill in Wayzata, you need to go there. He thought Dayton's donated it, and it is naturally canopied without buckthorn. When you go there it is like wow that is what Purgatory should've looked like. Now, you can see that Purgatory Park has the chance to get there.

Hanley said she had the chance to walk through Meadow Park. It was really mushy but it was a nice walk and she could see all the work that's being done along the marsh. That's a lot of work and it will be great when it is reseeded.

## 9. Information Items

### 2023 Gray's Bay Marina Summary

O'Dea gave the report.

### 2023 Athletic Field Use Summary

O'Dea gave the report.

Ingraham asked if the capital piece was restricted to field use or if it's an overall capital plan.

O'Dea said he will have to report back. He assumes we would put it back towards the fields but he will double check.

Hanley mentioned that it looks like a lot of hours but she wondered if there are fields that aren't being used that could be allocated elsewhere.

O'Dea said we have the two non-dedicated fields that are Gro Tonka and Oberlin that are kind of more multi-use. The dedicated ones are specific to baseball or softball. The overall usage is really good. We actually had another community group ask if we have anymore baseball fields available. Unfortunately, a lot of the times the answer is no or we have a few hours here on a Sunday. In general, our field usage is really high. Obviously it is nicer to have fields that can accommodate multiple sports but we do have some that are dedicated for certain sports.

Hanley said it looks like the Glen Lake softball fields are hardly being used and wondered if that was true.

O'Dea said it looks like the hours, yes. He would have to follow up with Community Facilities Superintendent Mike Pavelka on the reason why but it looks like those fields have not been used the last three years.

Hanley thought they have been used because she lives sort of by there.

O'Dea said he will follow up with that answer.

Hanley said we seem to need space for stuff here and there like skate parks or dog parks so she was just asking.

## 10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

Hanley questioned the timeline about the master plan and giving the public 30 days to comment. If the plan will be floated out there for people in late February, and they will be seeing it at the park board meeting on March 6, it doesn't seem like 30 days.

Kumka said the presentation to you folks would happen in the midst of that open comment period. Where he would walk you through the contents of the document and all the areas of

concern. That would be during that open comment period. Then during the May 1 meeting, he would present the final version based on your feedback and he would also have a summary of comments from the public that were delivered during that 30 day period. He would be delivering another draft of the plan at that point that would be open to comment and review.

Hanley asked if there was still time to tweak things after the May meeting.

Kumka said it is up to the park board. He needs to set some discreet timelines for us and our consultants, but understanding that if we feel the discussion needs to carry on or more reviews are necessary, than we will take that direction.

Ingraham said given some of the interest in the deeding of the original park and any other purchases or donations in that area. He thinks it would be really good at a minimum to have an update at the next meeting from legal or whomever. He was trying to figure out when Purgatory even became a park and it's mysterious to him. He thinks it was in the 1980's which is actually later than he thought but it would be helpful.

Kumka can task our planning and city staff associated with that area to dig up the answers.

## **11. Adjournment**

Jacobs moved, Hanley seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kathy Kline*

Kathy Kline  
Recreation Administrative Coordinator