

**1. Roll Call**

Park Board members in attendance included Jack Acomb, Nelson Evenrud, Chris Gabler, Cindy Kist, Peggy Kvam, Marvin Puspoki, Elise Raarup and Madeline Seveland. Staff members in attendance included Jo Colleran, Ann Davy, Darin Ellingson, Dave Johnson, Kelly O'Dea, Mike Pavelka, Perry Vetter, Amy Weiss and Sara Woeste.

Chair Raarup called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Gabler moved and Kist seconded a motion to approve the meeting Minutes of September 7, 2016 as submitted. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

Kvam moved and Puspoki seconded a motion to approve the Joint meeting minutes of the City Council and Park Board on November 2, 2016, as submitted. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

**3. Citizens Wishing to Discuss Items Not on the Agenda**

None.

**4. Business Items**

**A. Presentation of mountain biking plan by Minnetonka High School Vantage program students**

Johnson introduced the item by providing background on how the process has transpired place to date. He noted that at the September 7, 2016 meeting, the park board heard a request from local mountain biking enthusiasts for the consideration of adding dedicated and maintained mountain biking trails in the city's park system. Those speaking at the meeting included high school athletes and coaches from the Minnetonka and Hopkins School District, interested residents and others involved professionally in construction and maintenance of mountain biking trails. Johnson said that following the group's presentation, the park board directed staff to work with those presenting to explore potential partnerships for constructing and maintaining trails in the city's park system. Johnson indicated that towards the end of the September 7<sup>th</sup> discussion, Minnetonka resident Ben Marks offered as a suggestion utilizing students in the Minnetonka School District's VANTAGE program to assist in preparing information to bring back to the park board.

Johnson reported that in October, 2016, staff from the Parks and Natural Resources Divisions of the Public Works Department, and staff from the Recreation Services Department, joined Marks, students from the VANTAGE program and a mountain bike trail contractor to tour Big Willow and Civic Center Parks to explore possibilities for the addition of trails.

Johnson closed by indicating that staff has been working with Marks and the VANTAGE students for the past several weeks to prepare a proposal to bring back to the park board, thus the reason the Vantage group is attending the meeting this evening.

Johnson turned the floor over to the Vantage students who included Zane Bush (Project Manager), Christian Kramer, Matt Kothe, Teddy Nordvold and Adam Wilkinson. The students then presented an extensive PowerPoint presentation that reviewed the following aspects related to Mountain biking:

- Deficiency in the availability of mountain biking trails in the western suburbs, more specifically the Minnetonka area
- The demand being heard for mountain biking trails through the Minnetonka Matters initiative, and increase those interested in the sport
- A review of other successful mountain biking trails and maintenance operations including 7 miles of trail at Theodore Wirth Park in Minneapolis, 12 miles of trail at Lebonon Hills Park in Apple Valley, 3.5 miles of trails available in McLeod County (Hutchinson), and 5.5 miles of trails in Carver Lake Park in Maplewood.
- Methods used to raise capital for construction and operations of the trails.

Following a review of these areas, the Vantage Group presented their proposal which included 3.5 miles of trails in Big Willow Park connected by the SWLRT trail to 1.5 miles of trails in Civic Center Park. The group mentioned that, if successful, a second phase could include additional trails of about 2 miles located on the western side of the 494 corridor between Minnetonka Boulevard and Interstate 394.

The group closed by stating that their plan was developed keeping four primary concerns in mind 1. Safety, 2. Environmental Impact, 3. Accessibility and 4. Cost. They requested park board consideration of funding the plan as early in the 2018-2022 Capital Improvements Program, preferably 2018 and asked for any park board member questions.

Seveland asked why Civic Center Park and Big Willow Park were higher priorities than the 494 corridor. Bush responded that consideration of the 494 corridor came up later in the process and not as much detail work has been done to this point other than confirming that the property is owned by the city. He added that

both parks already have existing trail use and that what is being proposed formalizes that use.

Kvam asked for an explanation of what would be required as far as trail maintenance goes. Bush responded that required maintenance is very similar to what is required on the city's trail system such as correcting areas where erosion has occurred and providing preventative maintenance. Kvam asked how the trails could be closed when conditions require it. Bush indicated that signs and possibly gates could be used to close and indicate the reason, as well as by electronic means such as social media. He added that mountain bikers are typically very concerned about the condition of trails and do not want to ride them when conditions would deteriorate the trails in the long run. Kvam asked who would be responsible for closing the trails. Bush responded by saying it would be city staff or a designated volunteer.

Seveland asked if the VANTAGE group had researched any existing trails in Big Willow or Civic Center that could be utilized for mountain biking. Bush indicated that they had, however those trails would require reconditioning in order to be environmentally acceptable.

Evenrud noted that the area in Civic Center Park where trails are being requested is in close proximity to athletic fields. He asked if there were concerns with the amount of activity in the area and how it might impact biking. Bush again noted that signage would need to play a role in keeping non-bikers a safe distance from the trails.

Kvam noted that the park board has had recent discussions related to the request for those asking for new park amenities to consider putting "skin in the game" or by other words, provide funding to the project. She asked if the mountain biking population would consider doing so. Bush responded that he and his team were considering different types of fundraisers to assist with their request, but added that the primary need for trails is to benefit residents in Minnetonka and not necessarily the high school mountain biking teams.

Acomb asked if the trails being requested are seasonal or year-round. Bush responded that the trails are designed for use during the warmer months, but added that when frozen there is an increased interest in use during the winter months when the ground is frozen.

Raarup asked what the estimated distance would be in the 494 corridor. Resident Ben Marks estimated it to be about 2 miles.

Gabler asked if other area communities such as Deephaven have been approached about the addition of mountain biking trails. Nordvold indicated they have not, noting that their park acreage is somewhat limited.

Raarup asked if the Hennepin County Youth Sports grant program might support a project like this. Johnson responded that projects that fall under that grant program need to be dedicated to youth and it would be a stretch to consider this a youth program.

Raarup asked why only Big Willow and Civic Center were being considered. Johnson noted that he provided the VANTAGE group with an inventory of the park system, noting the sensitivity to past requests that greatly impacted private property lines and the natural resources in general. He suggested that the group consider not recommending trails in parks that are designated by the city as preserves such as Jidana. He also indicated that parks like Purgatory Park are overwhelmed with other activities such as dog walking, and general trail use. Marks added that the proposal presented this evening is an attempt to place these trails in the central part of the city and make them accessible from park to park.

Kist noted that she felt the students did a great job in researching and developing their recommendation.

Kvam asked Colleran for her perspective as it relates to the impact mountain biking trails would have in the natural areas of the park system. Colleran cautioned that while a 3 foot trail might seem manageable, it actually will impact trees and other plants up to 8 feet from the trail and that is the challenge. She noted that the addition of trails would need to be managed and there will be conflicts that need to be managed, however she feels the trails are also a good fit. Colleran noted that all parks receive considerable use, some more than others, and that managing all needs such as dog walkers, bird watchers, hikers, etc., will be a challenge as well. She closed by saying it's all about partnerships and learning to work and respect all interests.

*Due to time constraints, the park board tabled this item at 8:20 p.m. to allow for Item 4B to be discussed and returned at 8:45 to continue the discussion.*

Seveland expressed support for pursuing mountain biking trails in the park system, however she asked that staff proceed with caution with respect to Big Willow Park.

Kvam concurred with Seveland and added that the 494 corridor should be studied at the same time so that all options can be considered.

Hearing no further comments, Seveland moved and Gabler seconded a motion to direct staff to complete a 2017 Feasibility Study for the addition of mountain biking trails in the park system. All voted "Yes. Motion carried.

Gabler added that any groups providing funding to assist in the completion of the Feasibility Study would be “putting skin in the game” and show fiscal responsibility.

Gabler moved and Puspoki seconded a motion to direct staff to include a project page for the addition of mountain biking in the parks system if the feasibility study is completed and indicates it is possible both logistically and economically. All voted “Yes”. Motion carried.

**B. Review of 2016 Farmer’s Market operations and staff recommendations for 2017 operations**

Sara Woeste, Recreation Services Program and Special Events Manager, provided background to the operations of the city’s Farmers Market. She explained that Recreation Services acquired the responsibility of managing the market at the start of the 2016 season. Prior to 2016, Woeste noted that the Administration Department had been responsible for market operations.

Woeste explained that staff felt it was important to provide the park board with an operations summary given that the Farmers Market is a program taking place on city park property. Woeste introduced Amy Weiss who was hired in 2016 to manage the Farmers Market.

Weiss informed the board that she was hired starting with the 2016 season and that her position included marketing and operations responsibilities. Weiss added that she was also provided assistance with two key positions that included a market assistant and an on-site financial coordinator.

Weiss summarized operations with the following statistics from a vendor survey:

- 2016 attendance was 4,225, an average of 338 visitors for the 12 market dates
- Those involved in operations included 35 different vendors and 10 different community groups
- Sales information indicated that
  - o 216 credit card transactions occurred totaling \$4,025 an average sale of \$18.63
  - o The senior center plant sale generated \$1,711, an increase of 13% over 2015
  - o 82% of vendors indicated increased sales from 2015
  - o 85% of vendors plan to return in 2017
  - o 63% of vendors preferred an earlier start to the season
  - o 57% are interested in an indoor market during the winter/spring months

Weiss also reviewed data from a customer survey including:

- Why do you come to the Minnetonka market?
- How often do you attend?
- What prevents you from attending?
- What else would you like to see?
- Did you find the weekly market email helpful?
- Would you be interested in attending an indoor market?
- How did you hear about the market

Weiss closed her presentation by reviewing staff recommendations for the 2017 Farmers Market that included keeping the market in the same location (ice arena B parking lot) and the following enhancements:

**Logistics:**

1. Improve signage especially on Minnetonka Blvd.
2. Start season earlier (June 13<sup>th</sup>)
3. Explore idea of closing market at 6 p.m. in September

**Market:**

1. Increase diversity of products – more food choices including ready to eat options
2. Increase the number of high-quality artisans
3. Engage more community groups
4. Highlight City of Minnetonka programs and services (host the mayor and/or council members)
5. Add more structured kids activities
6. Implement PoP (Power of Produce) program
7. Offer health screenings (blood pressure checks, etc.)
8. Expand musician selection
9. Add winter market dates; include as option in application materials
10. Increase employee participation through Health Rewards program
11. Explore community sponsorships

**Administrative:**

1. Expand application to better delineate rules that are currently listed in guidelines
2. Create a weekly email to vendors to improve engagement
3. Work with communications team to ensure application can be completed online
4. Collaborate with communications to develop marketing plan

**Some additional tactics:**

1. Water bill insert at beginning of season
2. Half page flyer available for market guests
3. Electronic and paper flyers to faith communities & Minnetonka businesses

Weiss requested feedback or questions from park board members.

Raarup concurred with the staff recommendation to provide more ready to eat food options at the market, and asked if any other markets in the area compete with our established Tuesday time. Weiss indicated that staff has researched the date and time and concluded that Tuesdays remain the preferred night. She noted that changing to another day would remove the connection and efficiencies of sharing the night and location with Music in the Park, and possibly compete with other markets in the area.

Seveland concurred with support of more ready to eat foods and added that, as a user, she appreciates the email blasts that go out weekly. She asked if there was any capability to provide information further in advance. Weiss responded that, often time, vendors are letting her know of changes last minute, but added that when possible, advance notice could be utilized.

Hearing no further comments, Raarup thanked Weiss for her detailed report and for a very successful first season of managing the Farmers Market.

**C. Consideration of the 2017 Park Board Strategic Plan**

Johnson noted that in 2001, the park board worked with an independent consultant to establish a process for developing and annually refining a strategic plan. As a result of this endeavor, board members developed goals, objectives and specific action steps designed to meet the board's mission and vision developed earlier in the process.

Johnson reviewed the 2016 Park Board Strategic Plan and presented recommended staff changes that included splitting trail related projects into two categories that would include outdoor recreation and those that relate to connectivity. In addition, Johnson noted that objectives were added to enhance both council and resident knowledge of projects under consideration.

Hearing no further requests for changes, Johnson indicated that the final Park Board Strategic Plan will come back to the Board in January for adoption.

**5. Park Board Member Reports**

As the County District 6 representative on the Hennepin County Bicycle Advisory Committee, Kvam reported on discussions that took place at the Committee's November 21, 2016 meeting regarding the city's desire to construct a trail south of Ridgedale to the Regional Trail at Minnetonka Boulevard. Kvam reviewed potential challenges that were discussed and indicated that no final actions have been taken.

Seveland provided staff with information related to Bee-Friendly lawns for use as they see fit.

On behalf of the Board and staff, Raarup took the opportunity to thank Puspoki who was attending his last meeting after seven years of serving on the park board.

**6. Information Items**

There was no discussion related to the information included in the meeting packet.

**7. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items**

No additional items were discussed in addition to the calendar included in the meeting packet.

**8. Adjournment**

Raarup adjourned the meeting at 9:17 p.m.