



# Agenda Minnetonka Parks & Recreation Board

Wednesday, September 6, 2017

7 p.m.

Minnetonka Community Center – Council Chambers

## **P**arks & Recreation

### **Board Vision**

A city with outstanding parks and recreational opportunities within a valued natural environment.

### **Board Mission**

The mission of the Minnetonka Parks & Recreation Board is to proactively advise the City Council, in ways that will:

- » **Protect & enhance** Minnetonka's natural environment
- » **Promote quality** recreation opportunities and facilities
- » **Provide a forum for** citizens interested in our parks, trails, athletic fields and open space

#### 1. Roll Call

- |                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| ___ Jack Acomb           | ___ Peggy Kvam        |
| ___ James Durbin         | ___ Chris Gabler      |
| ___ Chair Nelson Evenrud | ___ Madeline Seveland |
| ___ Cynthia Kist         | ___ Chris Walick      |

#### 2. Approval of Minutes

A) June 7, 2017

#### 3. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the Agenda

#### 4. Business Items

A) Review Gray's Bay Marina Slip Fees

#### 5. Park Board Member Reports

#### 6. Information Items

#### 7. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

#### 8. Adjournment

## **Minutes of the Minnetonka Park Board Meeting of June 7, 2017**

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### **1. Roll Call**

Park Board members in attendance included Jack Acomb, Nelson Evenrud, Chris Gabler, Cindy Kist, Peggy Kvam, Christopher Walick, James Durbin and Madeline Seveland. Staff members in attendance included, Darin Ellingson, Jo Colleran, Kelly O'Dea, Perry Vetter, Sara Woeste and Kathy Kline.

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

### **2. Approval of Minutes**

Walick moved and Seveland seconded a motion to approve the meeting Minutes of April 5, 2017 as submitted. All voted "yes". Motion carried.

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

None.

### **4. Business Items**

#### **A. Mountain biking project update and public meeting**

O'Dea gave an overview on how the mountain biking process started. In September of 2016, the Park Board received a request from biking enthusiasts regarding dedicated and maintained trails within the Minnetonka park system. During the City's *Imagine Minnetonka* strategic planning process, there was a great amount of interest in mountain biking trails in Minnetonka.

One feasibility study was completed by the VANTAGE students from Minnetonka High School, and the other was to be completed by a company that was contracted by the city.

Since then, the city hired Tim Wegner with Trail Source, LLC to do a feasibility study. Wegner's feasibility study included maps of Big Willow and Civic Center parks. At the May 10 Park Board tour, Big Willow and Civic Center parks were visited. At Big Willow Park, students from the VANTAGE program presented the Park Board with a \$5,000 check. The money was raised by a fundraising campaign that the VANTAGE students did to help defray the costs of the feasibility study.

Wegner thanked everyone for allowing him to be in attendance. Wegner gave an overview of his background in building trails, information on building trails and findings at Big Willow and Civic Center parks.

Wegner has been building trails for 16 years. Some of the trails he has worked on include: Lebanon Hills, Cuyuna Lakes, Elm Creek, Lake Marion, Buck Hill, Welch Village, Traverse Trails system, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board trails, Theodore Wirth, Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Quaking Bog.

Wegner explained that this is the planning stage and does not include the fine tuning that will be necessary to avoid environmentally sensitive areas. The trails can be built four feet wide and can be narrowed down to three feet wide. The impacted area is approximately six to seven feet wide and can be built with sensitivity to those areas so there is not any negative environmental impact. Wegner noted that these are proposed trails and are laid out in a way that are sustainable, do not erode and are fun to use.

Wegner explained that there is approximately five miles of trails on the two different pieces of property. Five miles is enough to keep a rider, riding. Riders like to ride for about an hour to two hours, which according to their studies, is the average timeframe. The average rider speed is somewhere around seven miles per hour (mph). The design of the trail controls the speed. When there are interactions at intersections with other user groups, the control of the speed should be at a reasonable manner so that the riders will not have a negative impact on other users. It is recommended that trails be built one-directional or that directional is utilized once users are on the trail. It slows traffic down and has a positive impact on the experience. There are not any trails in the metro area that are two-way, all of them are built in one-direction.

Wegner mentioned that Elm Creek often has a full parking lot, but once you are biking on the trail, you do not feel like anyone else is out there. Lebanon Hills has 65,000 – 70,000 trips on the trail annually.

Wegner noted the following concerns regarding using Big Willow and Civic Center parks as locations: it is not a continuous five mile trail, parking at Big Willow Park and funding. Wegner's solution for the parking concern at Big Willow Park is to park at the Civic Center and ride to Big Willow. On the positive side, the high school mountain biking league would be able to utilize this trail and it would meet their needs.

Wegner explains that the proposed trail would be adopted by Minnesota Off-Road Cyclist (MORC). MORC has a system in place where they have a trail steward. The trail steward is the single point of contact between the trail users and the city. Below the steward are trained and educated dirt bosses who take care of the maintenance and issues on the trail. Usually there is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that is done between MORC and the city indicating what

responsibilities MORC has and what the city allows them to do. An example Wegner used was that some cities allow power tools to be used as long as there is proper training, whereas other cities do not allow power tools to be used.

Evensrud asked the Park Board if they have any questions for Wegner.

Walick asked with Wegner's experience in building trails, what long-term challenges there are; whether or not they are environmental. Walick also asked what some of the notable things are that need to be taken care of or revised. Wegner responded by explaining that the maintenance people or MORC volunteers would have to do a lot of trimming of buckthorn and prickly ash because there is such a heavy amount of it in Minnetonka. Currently, there is no chemical control that is being utilized in the parks where there are mountain biking trails and the trimming would have to be done manually. There would be between six to ten volunteers that show up on a regular basis, day after day, week after week, and year after year that would have a good handle on it. Sometimes curbing the enthusiasm of the volunteers can be a challenge because they love what they are doing. After a year or two of working, volunteers understand what they can do and park staff knows what to expect out of them. Most contractors, when they build a trail, have a one year warranty if there are any issues with water or erosion. When you build three, five or even 15 miles of trail, there is bound to be a mistake but it will get fixed.

Seveland asked what percentage of the proposed bike trail is within a floodplain area and if Wegner anticipates additional maintenance costs if the creeks were to rise. Wegner replied saying that they identify flood high water lines and try to stay a minimum of 25 feet away. The state requires to stay 50 feet away from water unless some sort of erosion control device such as bio-rolls are installed. Looking at the map for Big Willow Park, we are quite away from the waterline. The white lines on the map are two feet gradients and we are about 10 or 12 feet above the creek. Generally speaking, the trails are three or four feet wide when they are originally built. The trails narrow down to about 18 to 24 inches wide because it is almost the same spot that almost every rider, rides. It is a ribbon running through the woods and it is very narrow but by building the trails three to four feet wide, it allows the rider to find the best spot to ride so it flows very nice. If it is built 18 to 24 inches wide, it would not flow well. This way allows the rider to determine where the best place to ride is. The area outside of the ribbon of trail will revegetate with plants because old seedbed is uncovered when worked on. Trails are built with small excavators and walk behind bulldozers. There is small impact and in some cases a mix of seed is spread. The seed mix includes oats or a wheat to help establish organic control to hold the roots in place until the grass can get started.

Durbin asked if Wegner could compare the two site's intersections that would cross over with the pedestrian or non-mountain biking persons. Wegner stated that when an intersection is managed with a hiking trail, they run the rider up a

hill to slow them down or run them through a bit of a chicane to slow them down. At the intersection, bikers are probably riding about three to four mph, which is about the same speed as an average hiker. A trail runner, runs about six and a half mph. The intersections are managed so there are good sightlines so when a rider is biking at three or four mph, they can see at least 20 to 25 feet on either side. Volunteers will clear out buckthorn, prickly ash and any undergrowth that will create a problem for sightlines. A warning sign will be placed at the intersection. Minimizing the crossings as much as possible is important because there should not be a negative impact on existing users.

Durbin asked if Wegner had an estimated number of crossovers with this proposal. Wegner explained that at Big Willow, there are a number of crossovers on the uphill or higher area. Due to the amount of users and the sensitive areas that the naturalists have identified, the proposed trail will probably be moved. Currently, this is a concept plan and it will have to be fine-tuned with staff to make sure it gets done right. At Big Willow Park, if the trail gets pulled down the hill a little bit an intersection can be avoided completely. There are probably four intersections at Big Willow Park. At Civic Center Park, there are less than that because there are not as many hiking trails. Durbin strongly recommended that if the number of intersections can be minimized, the experience will be better for both the bikers and existing users. Wegner mentioned that they try to minimize those interactions between the bikers, hikers and other trail users.

Walick asked if they take in consideration winter use when making trails. With fat tire bikes and cross country skis he was wondering if that was factored in when designing trails. Wegner said they try to consider it but it depends on if the city wants to endorse the utilization of these trails during the winter. For grooming in winter months, trails could be stomped with snowshoes or by the use of equipment. Fat tire riders, move at a much slower pace, probably at a maximum of three to five mph because they are rolling a much bigger tire. Winter riding is almost as popular as summer riding.

Evensrud thanked Wegner for laying out the negatives and the positives.

O'Dea introduced the VANTAGE program. A member of the VANTAGE program talked about their involvement in the process. Their process started by a drafted proposal that was presented to the park board in December 2016. The assigned work was: 1) develop a recommendation for daily, weekly, monthly and annual maintenance 2) project staff hours required for annual maintenance 3) prepare an annual budget 4) develop submitted user numbers 5) cost benefit analysis 6) identifying/committing restoration volunteers. A short list was compiled and is found in the feasibility study that was attached in the agenda packet. The representative asked for questions.

Walick asked if the VANTAGE program has talked to the city about putting links to volunteer items on the Minnetonka website.

The VANTAGE representative replied by saying that discussions have not pertained to that specific outlet but that is an opportunity to explore in the future. Currently, their involvement with volunteers has been through contacting the high school mountain biking teams, organizations at the high school and MORC.

Durbin asked what the predicted capacity of riders per day on one of the proposed trails would be.

The VANTAGE representative answered that in the proposed five mile system, there is an estimation of 40 riders per day. This estimation is based off of Woodbury's daily attendance. The total was adjusted slightly for the total operational period for the proposed trail. If there is an estimation of about ten hours that you can ride the trails in a day; that equates to roughly one rider every 15 minutes.

Acomb mentioned that the Minnetonka School District reached out to the VANTAGE program. Acomb asked if any of the Hopkins coordinators were involved given that the programs are comparable in size; and if they are part of the equation for volunteers.

The VANTAGE representative replied that they have been in contact with the leaders of the mountain biking team at Hopkins High School. Currently, logistics are being worked on but are continuing to have discussions with them.

Evensrud thanked the VANTAGE group for all their hard work with the project and for fundraising.

O'Dea stated that in the feasibility study done by the VANTAGE group, it illustrated Woodbury having a comparable trail. Staff took a tour of the Carver Lake Park trails and images were projected on the screen.

Gabler noted that Wegner mentioned parking being one of the issues, especially around Big Willow Park and the Civic Center. Gabler asked Wegner, if the mountain biking trails are accessible from our regional trail system, are there other places for people to park and then ride in, rather than drive to the Civic Center or Big Willow Park?

Wegner answered by saying that when it was discussed with another consultant, due of the regionality of the parks, it is believed that a lot of people will ride to the trail. People will realize there is limited parking and will park at other locations and ride to the trail.

Evensrud moved forward to the public comments.

Ben Marks, 4362 Avondale St., Minnetonka, is anticipating that these trails will be accessed by local riders that will be riding from their homes. It is a proposed five mile trail network and if someone wanted to ride a ten to twelve mile network, they will get in their car and go there. This is meant to be an amenity for the residents of Minnetonka. He thanked the park board, city staff, VANTAGE group and all the people for coming. He pointed out that there are several stakeholder groups in attendance, such as: business owners, Minnetonka Mountain Bike team members, Hopkins Mountain Bike team members, MORC members and local residents that are willing to provide leadership opportunities.

Zane Bush, 12919 Inverness Rd., Minnetonka, Big Willow is one of his favorite places and he loves to mountain bike. Knowing that the trails at Big Willow are not sustainable; could be dangerous and potentially damaging to the environment, he would rather ride 15 miles to Theodore Wirth Park. To ride there, is a whole day commitment and it makes it really hard to practice a sport that he loves. As a VANTAGE student, he was given the opportunity to be a part of the project to bring this forward and give an impact to the community. Members of the VANTAGE program are willing to put in the effort and are looking for ways to give back to the community.

Ben Johnson, 4736 Gaywood Dr., Minnetonka, is a Hopkins Mountain Bike team representative. Currently, they ride on the LRT, Theodore Wirth Park, or drive somewhere far. Johnson does not feel comfortable having his seventh grade son bike to Theodore Wirth and is supportive of having something close. In regards to parking, there are parking spaces at Gilliam Field and that is close to the trail. Parking for the mountain bike teams, vehicles park at the high school and the team bikes from there. Johnson thanked the VANTAGE program and others that worked hard on this.

Steve Fowel, Owner of Tonka Cycle and Ski, Hopkins. They are one of the stakeholders that is offering monetary support of \$1,000 a year to assist with maintenance. Knowing customers from the store, the trail will get used by people that shop locally and live locally. As a shop, we will help communicate anything that needs to be communicated as far as use and maintenance of the trail.

Tim Wegner, Trail Source, LLC, when there are designated trails, sensitive areas will be protected in the parks. The other thing that happens is almost all undesirable activities are removed from the park. Theodore Wirth Park has changed significantly and there is no more climbing up from the railroad and camping in the woods at a trail in St. Paul. Those are the positive things that will happen in the parks. The negative activities leave because people do not want to be observed doing them.

John Mielke, 16311 Limerick Ln., Minnetonka, is willing to volunteer to be one of the dirt bosses and thinks there are a lot of people like him. Mielke has eight grandchildren that live within biking distance of these parks.

Heidi Gray, 13800 Knollway Dr. S., Minnetonka thanked the VANTAGE students for taking the opportunity to look at this project. The west metro is lacking in single track trails. The closest trails to this area are at Theodore Wirth, Elm Creek and Murphy - Hanrehan Parks. Lake Rebecca opened up a year and a half ago and has trouble staying open so this is perfect for this area. According to the turnout, a lot of the residents are going to support it and a lot of the residents will ride it. There is the parking issue, yet it has good connectivity to the rest of the trail systems. Local businesses such as Tonka Cycle and restaurants along Minnetonka Boulevard would benefit from being so close to the trail. Gray would take great pride in taking ownership of these trails in her community.

Luke Van Santen, 2148 Sheridan Hills Rd., Minnetonka, mentioned that the LTD Brewing Company in Hopkins is a short 11 minute ride along the trail from Big Willow. There are a couple of other breweries that are a little further away, but if people plan a trip, they can park at the brewery, go biking and then go back to the brewery.

Ruth Peterson, 5645 Hathoway Ln., Minnetonka, has lived in Minnetonka for 39 years and is a Natural Resources restoration volunteer. Peterson represented Heather Holm because she was unable to attend. Attached is a letter that Peterson read and distributed to park board members.

Dana Kromer, 3725 Elmwood Pl., Minnetonka, the thing that we love about Minnetonka are the wetlands and the woods, which a lot of them are city property and protected by the city and federal law and state law. Thank you for considering putting some mountain bike trails locally. Driving to a single track bothers me because I have to load the bike in the car to get there. Kromer guarantees that if the trails are built they will never drive to the trails because we live right off the LRT.

George Skinner, 15330 Lynn Terrace, Minnetonka, does not support diverting city park land or city funds to create technical trails that would not be used by the great majority of Minnetonka residents. Minnetonka's city parks should not be used as regional resources, the parks are too small and additional use will degrade the park experiences of the users of their existing trail networks. Completing and maintaining planned city trail systems that allows city residents to move safely around the city is a higher use. Multiple use that has been described in some of the readings that are in supporting documents do not seem realistic. Walkers with headphones, dog walkers with rollout leashes, it is hard to walk on our trails as it is. Data from the city surveys indicates that city residents value the natural areas and wildlife. Networks of trails in these small parks will push wildlife away from walking trails and perhaps from the parks themselves. Even having a single track, human users have a much bigger impact than just the space they physically occupy. Users will push the wildlife away for hundreds of feet in each direction. Technical trails are to be established and should be



limited to existing degraded areas. Also, narrow trails will not allow city patrol or emergency access.

Skinner believes that if the school district wishes to have technical facilities they should build those trails on the district properties with district funds. The high school campus in Minnetonka, is adequately sized compared to our parks that have been discussed. Incorporating technical trails into their landscaping plans, could be a doable option. Skinner would also like to see potential trail volunteers direct their attention to existing damage that has already occurred in our parks through unauthorized use.

Around 2001, a group tried to get mountain bike trails in Lone Lake Park and Skinner met with those folks at that time and followed them on trails. Skinner found that they were not staying within the park boundaries and were not observing the slope regulations that their own guidelines put forth. Perhaps there was some confusion of degree of slope versus percentage of slopes. Both trail areas viewed at that time have done nothing but expand. It undoes what so many city volunteers have been trying to do with our natural resources department. Skinner applauds the city for having a restoration program. Many cities in the metro do not have a program and it speaks well to our city and our residents for their interests.

Mary Beth Pottratz, 11366 Minnetonka Mills Rd., Minnetonka, has been a resident for over 15 years and prior to that worked in Minnetonka for another 15 years. Pottratz loves how beautiful Minnetonka is and the strong support that everyone gives to natural resources, our beautiful parks, healthy lifestyles and especially to our kids. Pottratz was really excited to hear that the high schools were supporting mountain bike programs and that the coaches and parents are behind it. Pottratz asked, "Why is Big Willow one of the locations chosen?" Pottratz has been volunteering there to abate garlic mustard and buckthorn for many years and has done native plant restorations and plantings, along with a lot of other volunteers. It was surprising to find out that Big Willow Park is a consideration of where the mountain biking would be.

There definitely should be a designated spot for mountain biking because it is a wonderful, healthy lifestyle. Pottratz wished she had more time to learn about this and to go through the things that she found online. Pottratz wondered if there are a lot of other residents who do not know about it. The first Pottratz heard about it was in the Minnetonka Memo that came out during the past week, however, she learned there was material online going back to last September. While working and walking in Big Willow, there have been sightings of bald eagles, mink, river otter, fox, muskrats, great blue herons, great egrets, cranes, green herons and a lot of songbirds. Pottratz is hoping the city will consider the fragility of the environment. Also, to remember that in order to get to the mountain biking trails within Big Willow, the bikers will need to pass the regular trails and that is precisely where a lot of the landscaping has been done. In order to protect that,

Pottratz's vote would be to choose a different location. It is a very important project and she hopes the city can find something for it.

Nate Mielke, 1408 Yorkshire Ave S., Minnetonka, clarified that mountain biking teams are a club sport and not a high school sport. They do not follow the same rules as high school leagues. Mielke is a father of four kids that mountain bikes and it is something they enjoy doing as family. They love riding from their house and utilizing the parks as they are. In the wintertime, a lot of the trails open up between marsh areas. Mielke has enjoyed being in his hometown, using the local parks, being able to ride his bike from his house and not having to get in the car. If there are any questions regarding having enough volunteers for cleaning up invasive species, there is a heavy support and there are volunteer organizations or sport groups that will help with it.

Logan Cummings, 18000 Tamarack Dr., Minnetonka, is representing the Minnetonka Mountain Biking team and noted that there are several members in attendance. This is his fourth season and got into mountain biking because of convenient trails that were close to his house. Because Big Willow Park and Civic Center are near the LRT, the LRT is going to have a huge impact on the usefulness of these locations for mountain biking. The mountain biking team regularly practices on the LRT, so having the trails really close to the LRT would make it easier for the team and much easier for other residents to utilize these trails. It would also result in a little more publicity for the mountain biking team. Cummings clarified that mountain biker's love nature and are not out to destroy it; they want to help the eco-system and they mountain bike because they love nature. If there is anything that can be done to help preserve the parks, the mountain bike community would support it.

Chris Kluge, 12817 Burwell Dr., Minnetonka, has lived here for 25 years and walks his dogs at Big Willow Park almost every day. This park is really unique with the wetland, floodplain, hills, woods and that is probably one of the reasons it was picked for mountain biking. Kluge requested that the park board think about what a significant change this would be to this parcel of land. Kluge supports mountain biking but believes that Big Willow Park is the wrong place for it. For all the neighbors that live around Big Willow Park and have used it for years, the park would change significantly by people not only from Minnetonka but from the west metro.

Aaron Braggins, St. Louis Park, technical director for MORC is here in place of the executive director and is willing to answer any questions.

Brad Anderson, 3600 Prestige Ln., Minnetonka, built a house in 1980. Found out his house was originally in an area where there was a train track and the county wanted to use it as a demonstrative light rail line. A group was formed, they fought the City of Minnetonka to oppose the light rail and got it switched, and legislation passed. Anderson's son is an Eagle Scout and did an erosion control

project there. It is an environmental sensitive area and is so unique with the creek going through there. Putting a mountain bike trail there would destroy the park and the whole feeling of that park. Mountain bikers love to go off trail and you will have a lot more erosion and will notice more trail damage through the park. He wishes staff would look at another park besides Big Willow.

O'Dea mentioned that he received four calls from when the packet was mailed out until today from residents that were not able to make it tonight but wanted to give feedback. Three of the four residents were against the project for similar environmental reasons. The one person that was for the project, was a person that liked mountain biking.

During the public comments it was asked, "Why was Big Willow Park chosen?" O'Dea explained that a number of parks were discussed and they thought it was a good fit because it is a central location, located off the LRT, a community park and in combination with Civic Center, it is a good trail length for bike enthusiasts.

The second question asked during the public comments was, "What has been the public process so far?" 1) This meeting was publicized in the *Minnetonka Memo*, 2) there is a project page on [eminnetonka.com](http://eminnetonka.com) 3) and notifications and updates are emailed to those that subscribe to the park board or the project page. Evensrud added that previous park board minutes are also available online.

Evensrud closed the public comments and opened comments to the park board members.

Kvam is a cyclist and really wants to make this project work. Kvam noted that when biking, there needs to be enough miles to make it worth getting out on the bike. The concern with Big Willow Park is that there may not be enough miles that can be tolerated environmentally. Kvam encouraged staff to look at the 494 corridor. It is a location that has not been restored; has great hills; and is fun to ride as a road cyclist. From an environmental perspective, that area is not a concern and it can be planted or groomed to fit the course. Kvam wants the trail to have enough miles and does not want to damage the environment.

Seveland agreed with Kvam but wanted to point out that amongst all of the comments, nobody was against using the Civic Center as a location. There was one thing that a fair amount of people brought up and that was the ambiance and how Big Willow Park feels. Seveland's concern is that the mountain biking trail in Big Willow Park may affect the ambiance of the park, even if the trail was environmentally sustainable.

Wallick agreed that based on the concern of Big Willow Park that it is worth considering taking a look at the 494 corridor or other locations that might be feasible.

Evensrud stated that he would be interested in hearing staff's input on the environmental differences between Big Willow and Civic Center.

Colleran responded by saying that she is in support of mountain biking because there is an opportunity. Residents want outdoor recreation but anytime there is future development into natural areas; there is an impact and it is about finding balance. In Carver Park in Woodbury, there was no garlic mustard and they had very little buckthorn compared to Minnetonka. Big Willow has been restored since the late 1990's and Civic Center has been restored since the early 2000's. Out of 1500 acres of parkland, 750 acres is natural. Of those 750 acres, 310 acres are under restoration. About 20 percent of our total parkland is under restoration. When the VANTAGE group first came forward, they recommended the trail along the LRT. Colleran and Janet VanSloun, Natural Resources Restoration Specialist, walked Big Willow Park and mapped out high priority areas that the trail needs to avoid. The concept plan that was in the park board packet, is only a concept and still needs to be refined. Colleran notes that the concept plan would probably be downsized from the current one because of the environmental impact.

Colleran compared Big Willow to Civic Center and said that Big Willow has more diversity and is higher quality. However, Civic Center has a stronger stem density. Colleran says there is also opportunity on the north side of the soccer fields in a prairie where restoration is taking place at Civic Center. Colleran thinks the character of Big Willow would change and that staff should look at the 494 corridor because no restoration has been done there, but that is a personal opinion.

There is a community need and support for mountain biking. However, there has to be thoughtful consideration to where the trail would be placed with the understanding that there is going to be impact. There has been a lot of people expressing interest in volunteering with the maintenance of the trail. Colleran explained that volunteers would go through a natural resources training. In the training, volunteers would learn the biology of the natural area because if they understand it better; volunteers would have a stronger contribution to maintaining that area. The trail is expected to be five miles, however from a restoration perspective, there would be ten miles to maintain. That is because there would be impact on both sides of the trail.

Evensrud thanked Colleran for her comments.

Gabler stated that he likes the idea of the 494 corridor because there is nothing there. Gabler thinks there may be more damage from mountain bikers on unauthorized trails and that erosion and damage may have been overstated. If everybody does the right thing and the area is monitored, there will not be damage. Gabler said a decision will have to be made because there are a lot of

supporters and it is something that is part of our vision in recreation and the parks. Gabler is not convinced that Big Willow Park is the best place to have the trail and thinks the 494 area is better suited and is still easy to get to.

Colleran noted that when staff was at Carver Park, they talked with Reid Smidt a recreation manager with the City of Woodbury. Smidt indicated that the trails originally were built to get water off the trails because if water sits on the trails, the trails would be closed. There was very little erosion and it was almost like the trail was built into the side of the hill. The cut was about three feet up and the slope on the right side of the trail goes down. There was very little erosion.

Evensrud thanked Colleran for her comments. Evensrud noted that there is a lot of interest in water quality. Evensrud commented that the VANTAGE program and all the other groups involved did a great job bringing people in to the meeting.

Walick mentioned that after hearing the public comments, information regarding environmental considerations and impacts needs to be available to the public. Walick noted that the feasibility studies completed by the VANTAGE students and Trail Source LLC were great. The reports clearly addressed specific topics such as plant life and wildlife in the parks.

Evensrud stated that one reoccurring theme is that if the trail is not maintained, it can go down the wrong path.

Seveland commented that this is an amazing opportunity. One thing to understand about natural resources, is that in order to get people to protect natural resources, they have to find value in it. In order for people to find value in it, there has to be something that people enjoy. There is a lot of support for this project and it would be a great amenity for our community. Seveland would like to see a partnership between environmentalists and the city. The partnership would include working together on maintaining the trail. There is an education piece and perhaps by having this trail, it could increase the diversity and clean up some invasive plants. Besides being an amenity, there is a huge opportunity to foster natural resources.

Ellingson stated that although the 494 corridor does not have the challenges of being an active restoration area, the challenge it does face is the proximity to residents. That is not a component in Big Willow Park and Civic Center and is something that would have to be balanced. One thing that would have to be further discussed is the maintenance agreement between the city and MORC. Defining the maintenance roles and responsibilities for trail maintenance would have to be more elaborate due to the amount of restoration done in the park.

Evensrud asked Ellingson if his comment on the proximity to residents meant the residents that live nearby it.

Ellingson responded to Evensrud by saying there are homes adjacent to the western part of the corridor.

Walick agreed with Seveland and thinks this is a good thing. Walick thinks it is especially important for these groups such as MORC and the students to work closely with the city and the environmental components. Regarding the educational piece, there Walick suggested that there could be two-hour meetings or classes every week because it is a very important part of this project. The trail is not just a dirt path that need maintaining, it will need the proper up-keeping. Minnetonka residents take great pride in the nature of the city and want to be able to maintain, foster and grow that.

Nelson closed the park board comments after hearing no other comments.

Vetter mentioned there was a culmination of grassroots efforts that first popped up during the Imagine Minnetonka process. There were two other grassroots efforts mentioned earlier in this meeting. This meeting was to review a concept plan for Civic Center and Big Willow Park and to unveil it to the public and get feedback. Now the questions to the board are:

1. Do you want to proceed with master planning and should the I-494 corridor be added to this study?
2. What other details should be included and do you want to move forward with master planning for mountain biking amenities in the city?

There is not a motion tonight, rather this is more of a discussion on what direction to head towards. There is going to be a lot more work before anything will be formally presented but those are two discussion points.

Evensrud responding by saying that we touched on those topics and thought that we had sufficient information to move forward.

O'Dea summarized saying that most park board members were interested in exploring the 494 corridor area. That is something that can be done either internally or by working with outside agencies. As far as developing a master plan, there were comments about using other parks rather than Big Willow Park. That also is something that can be researched more to see if there is a better location.

Evensrud commented that anybody who loves recreation, likes doing big things with a lot of passion and a lot of input. To do special projects like this is great and we definitely want it done right. Evensrud thanked everyone for their input. Kvam suggested that staff look at Victoria-Evergreen Park. It has not been as carefully restored as Big Willow Park and Civic Center. Also, it is not far from the LRT.

O'Dea reminded everyone how they can stay informed about the project. Information will be updated on the project page that is posted on *eminnetonka.com*.

Evensrud thanked everyone again for attending and giving their input.

## **5. Park Board Member Reports**

Kist mentioned that she went biking with her husband Memorial Day weekend. Since they have not been to the Burwell House in a long time, they stopped and really enjoyed it. She pointed out that sometimes people that have lived in Minnetonka for a long time, miss out on great things.

Walick said that Libbs Lake has a wall and it looks like the stones and bricks are deteriorating.

Ellingson responded to Walick and said that there is a big retaining wall along the channel. That is a big project that is coming up. The wall is starting to lean over and that is something that will need to be rebuilt in the very near future.

## **6. Information Items**

O'Dea mentioned that Shady Oak Beach opens this Friday, June 9. There have been around 1600 season passes sold as of Monday and have been busy selling them all week.

Evensrud asked if the opening date is dependent on the weather.

O'Dea responded and said that typically it depends on when staff are back in town because most are college students.

Kist thanked staff that organized the boards and commissions event last Wednesday. There was a very good park board turnout. Kist and Vetter discussed the possibility of doing a park board bike ride as one of our activities maybe later this summer or fall.

## **7. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items**

O'Dea reviewed the six month meeting schedule and mentioned that there will not be a meeting in July due to the Fourth of July holiday. We can look at the six month schedule and see where a bike ride might fit in. If we can tie that into August, September, or October, I think that is something we can do as a board and invite

staff as well. The other highlight is on November 1, there is the joint meeting with the city council. The volunteer recognition event will also take place that same evening.

Summer Festival is on June 24. Part of the Summer Festival is the youth triathlon that starts at 7:30 a.m. at the Williston Fitness Center. Activities at the Civic Center begin at 4 p.m. Woeste mentioned that if anyone wants to volunteer at the triathlon, to let her know. Evensrud asked if volunteers are needed at the Summer Festival. Woeste responded by saying that more volunteers are needed in the morning, but if someone wanted to volunteer at night they could. Seveland asked if the triathlon is replacing the Burwell event. Woeste said the Burwell event is still taking place. The triathlon takes place in the morning, the Burwell House events will take place from about 10:30 a.m. – 3 p.m., Civic Center activities begin at 4 p.m. Evensrud encouraged everyone to go and stay for the fireworks. O'Dea explained that the triathlon replaced the 8K race that we used to have in the mornings. Last year was the first year for the youth triathlon.

## **8. Adjournment**

Gabler mentioned to adjourn, seconded by Seveland. Evensrud adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.



I am writing to provide comments about the proposed mountain bike trails at City Center and Big Willow Parks. I believe that mountain biking is an excellent sport and a great way to get citizens using our City's parks and I am an avid cyclist myself. I am also a restoration professional and native plant expert. The City of Minnetonka does not currently own an adequately sized park, not undergoing ecological restoration by the Natural Resources division, that could accommodate a matrix of mountain bike trails. I have personally witnessed over time what unauthorized use of the trails at several Minnetonka parks has caused; what were once small 12" wide foot paths through woodland restoration areas have been eroded into 6-8' wide, bare paths. See attached photos.

Mountain biking trails should ideally be located on park lands that are not considered high quality and not undergoing any kind of ecological restoration. For an adequately sized area to accommodate a decent mountain bike trail system, it is the large parks in Minnetonka including Big Willow, Lone Lake, or Purgatory park that would be the most suitable, but they are the very parks that the City is doing extensive restoration work in to preserve the biological diversity and representative plant communities in our City. Big Willow park is a wonderful example of a oak woodland-brushland plant community and hosts a diversity of woody and herbaceous woodland plants, some rescued from road construction projects that could be destroyed with the installation of mountain bike trails. The Natural Resources division staff and volunteers spend thousands of hours annually removing invasive species and our parks are some of the most well-maintained from a restoration standpoint. Minnetonka is at the leading edge of restoring their parks and have very high quality natural areas compared with most other suburban municipalities.

Installing mountain bike trails in restoration areas creates both small- and large-scale disturbances, regardless of the skill level of the trail builder. These disturbances become opportunities for invasive plants to get established, and allow the further spread of the invasive plants as the seeds are transported on the tires of the mountain bikes. The City of Burnsville staff report that they have had significant erosion problems and the spread of invasive plant species, including garlic mustard, into other parts of the park from the mountain bike trail system, since trails were installed in the Terrace Oaks Park. See attached map.

After talking with employees of Three Rivers Park district and the City of Burnsville, they also expressed concerns about the long-term maintenance of the mountain bike trail system. Agreements with the mountain bike groups should include not only trail maintenance but the ongoing ecological upkeep of the trail system including the monitoring and removal of invasive plants. These employees have found that long-term, the trails are not maintained for invasive plants by the mountain biking organization, and the City or Park District has to incur the costs of the restoration management.

For the above reasons, I would propose that the Park Board look at alternative sites for mountain bike trails in Minnetonka that do not have a significant ecological value, and are not undergoing any kind of ecological restoration. If the City eventually acquired the Hennepin County Horne School property south of Glen Lake for example, this would be an ideally-sized site and location to consider for mountain biking trails since the open fields/horse pastures have little ecological value but with a trail system would remain open-space, and the site is conveniently located near the network of regional bike trails.

Heather Holm, Minnetonka resident and natural resources restoration volunteer





Photo taken last week of restoration foot path at Purgatory Park formerly 12" wide that has been enlarged by mountain bike use



Hole dug to make jump over log, April 2016 Purgatory Park





Erosion caused by bikes in restoration area in March 2016, Purgatory Park





Jumps made November 2015 in restoration area in Purgatory Park



**Legend**

**Garlic Mustard Patches**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**Material**

- Mountain Bike Trail
- Hiking Trail
- ▭ Park Boundary



**Garlic Mustard Locations  
Terrace Oaks Park**



0 210 420 840 1,260 1,680  
Feet

**Minnetonka Park Board Item 4A  
Meeting of September 6, 2017**

<b>Subject:</b>	Consideration of 2018 boat slip rates for Gray's Bay Marina
<b>Park Board related goal:</b>	To provide quality athletic and recreational facilities
<b>Park Board related objective:</b>	Conduct an annual review of the Gray's Bay Marina operations plan
<b>Brief Description:</b>	The park board will review Marina operations and information comparing boat slip lease fees at Gray's Bay Marina to other local boat slip facilities to determine if changes to the existing rates are warranted.

## **Background**

The Park Board has historically reviewed and made changes to Gray's Bay Marina boat slip fees. The last increase in slip fees took place prior to the 2012 boating season; increasing \$100 to \$3,900 per season. Slip fees have remained at \$3,900 through 2017. Since 2012, the board has recommended keeping the fees the same based on the fact that the marina has met budget expectations in all previous years.

To aid in the consideration of slip fees, a matrix showing several local private and municipal operated facilities is attached. The facilities included are the same facilities reviewed in previous years and amenities at each facility vary widely. Staff believes the existing amenities at Gray's Bay Marina are more comparable to private facilities than municipal with the exception of boat storage, mechanic and access to parking during peak hours.

The objective of the marina business plan is to cover all operating costs and long-term capital costs (escrow). Since 2003 when the marina opened, the facility has achieved the budget expectations initially established for the facility by the Park Board.

## **Summary**

Some factors to be considered when making a decision whether or not to increase rates include:

- Annual Operating Costs – This includes items such as wages, gas, building and grounds, and capital outlay.
- Past Increases - Since the facility opened in 2003 there have been five slip fee increases. The total amount of increases over the past 15 years equate to an average of approximately 2.4% per year. Increases are outlined below:
  - 5% (\$140) increased to \$2,940 in 2006

- 20% (\$584) increased to \$3,524 in 2007
  - 5% (\$175) increased to \$3,700 in 2008
  - 2.7% (\$100) increased to \$3,800 in 2009
  - No increase in 2010 or 2011
  - 2.6% (\$100) increased to \$3,900 in 2012
  - No increase 2013-2017
- Surveys - Past survey responses from slip holders showed a concern for raising rates.
  - Wait List - There has been difficulty maintaining a reasonable wait list. The current wait list stands at 15, down from 52 in 2010. Staff believes this is an indication that the boat slip market is not as strong as it was prior to 2009.
  - Budget Escrow – The marina escrow account continues to be strong and ahead of what has been budgeted since the marina opened.

Staff has included a summary of the revenue, expense, capital outlay, LMCD and escrow amounts that will cover future long-term capital costs. As indicated, Gray's Bay Marina has met the budget objectives initially put in place.

### **Recommendation**

For comparison purposes, since 2016 the average cost of boat slips privately operated increased 3.2% to \$5,444 and municipal operated boat slips increased approximately 1.9% to \$1,771. The boat slip fee of \$3,900 currently charged at Gray's Bay Marina is less than the average private slip fee of \$5,444 (\$5,274 average in 2016).

Staff has determined that due to the marina's strong escrow position it is not necessary to increase slip fees and recommends the fee stay at \$3,900 for the 2018 season.

### **Discussion Points**

- Does the park board concur with staff's recommendation to keep the boat slip fee at \$3,900 for the 2018 season?

**Recommended Park Board Action:** Review attached operation information and provide direction to staff regarding a recommendation for 2018 marina boat slip fees.

### **Attachments**

1. Boat Slip Facility Comparison
2. Summary of revenue and expenses

## Local Boat Slip Facility Comparison – 2017

Services	Municipally Operated				Privately Operated							
	Deephaven	Excelsior	Wayzata	Gray's Bay	Boatworks, Wayzata	Caribbean, Tonka Bay	Excelsior Bay Harbor (Bayside Marine)	Howard's Point, Shorewood	Minnetonka Yacht Club, Deephaven	Tonka Bay	North Shore, Orono	Greenwood
Attendant				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Gas				✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Pump-out				✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Retail								✓				✓
Vending				✓	✓						✓	
Bait								✓				
On-site Restrooms	satellite	adjacent park	next to beach	permanent	adjacent park	permanent	permanent	permanent	satellite	permanent	permanent	permanent
Mechanic					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Cost/foot of slip 2017 (2016)	\$34 (\$34)	\$102 res; (\$93) \$87 res Sr; (\$79) \$203 non-res (\$186)	\$55 / \$69 (\$69)	\$150 (\$150)	\$288 (\$269)	\$165 (\$160)	\$202 (\$202)	\$212 (\$199)	\$204 (\$198)	\$200 (\$190)	\$200 (\$200)	\$204 (\$204)
Cost per 26' slip/2017 (2016)	\$875 (\$875)	\$2,652 (\$2,548)	\$1,430 (inner) \$1,788 (outer) (\$1,788)	\$3,900 (\$3,900)	\$7,500 (\$7,000)	\$4,290 (\$4,160)	\$5,264 (\$5,264)	\$5,500 (\$5,185)	\$5,304 (\$5,148)	\$5,200 (\$4,940)	\$5,200 (\$5,200)	\$5,300 (\$5,300)
Number of slips	75	44	100	29	80	148	85	45	15	70	118	107
Parking	Street	Street	Parking lot	Parking lot	Parking lot	Parking lot	Parking Lot	Parking lot	Parking lot	Parking lot	Parking lot	Parking Lot
Dates of operation	May 1- Nov 15	May 15- Last wknd Oct	June 10- Nov 1	Ice out- Oct 31	Ice out- Oct 31	Ice out- Oct 31 year round storage available	Ice out- Ice in	Apr 1- Oct 31	Ice out- Ice in	Ice out- Ice in	May 15- Sept 15	May 1- Oct 1
Number of Mooring Buoys	75	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	0
Plans to increase slip fees in 2018	no	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no	No	yes	yes	no



## Gray's Bay Marina

### Summary of Revenues and Expenses

	Actual 2015		Budget 2016		Actual 2016
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$247,005</b>		<b>\$237,400</b>		<b>\$240,471</b>
Expenses	(\$181,994)		(\$196,600)		(\$167,201)
Capital Outlay	\$0		(\$15,000)		(\$12,514)
LMCD	(\$23,975)		(\$21,500)		(\$21,481)
Escrow*	<u>(\$41,036)</u>		<u>(\$4,300)</u>		<u>(\$39,275)</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b><u>(\$247,005)</u></b>		<b><u>(\$237,400)</u></b>		<b><u>(\$240,471)</u></b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$0</b>		<b>\$0</b>		<b>\$0</b>

\* Total 2003-2016 amount budgeted in escrow account = \$267,400; actual amount escrowed through 2016 = \$459,060.

**Minnetonka Park Board Item 6  
Meeting of September 6, 2017**

<b>Subject:</b>	Mountain Biking Project Update
<b>Park Board related goal:</b>	N/A
<b>Park Board related objective:</b>	N/A
<b>Brief Description:</b>	Provide the park board with an update on the mountain biking project.

At the June 7 park board meeting, Trail Source, LLC presented the board with a feasibility study and concept maps for adding mountain biking trails within Minnetonka's park system. The board received feedback both in support of and opposed to the concept, and requested staff continue to study the proposal and review additional locations, including the I-494 corridor.

Project update:

- Staff continues to hear from many residents regarding the potential creation of mountain biking trails. While many residents support the addition of trails, others continue to voice concern over the potential project. Due to the amount of feedback received, staff is in the process of hiring a professional consulting and design firm to assist in coordinating a more thorough public input process. Though this engagement process will delay the development of a formal proposal, it will provide staff with the information needed to conduct a more robust feasibility study.
- Representatives from the consulting firm will present options for conducting the public input process to the park board for consideration at the Oct. 4 meeting.
- In addition to coordinating a public input process, the consultants will also assist staff with a review of the technical aspects of creating mountain biking trails.
- Staff continues to research location options and study safety concerns, environmental impacts and parking needs of potential trails. The complete results of this research will be presented to the park board at a later date.

**Minnetonka Park Board Item 6  
Meeting of September 6, 2017**

<b>Subject:</b>	Pickleball Update
<b>Park Board related goal:</b>	N/A
<b>Park Board related objective:</b>	N/A
<b>Brief Description:</b>	Provide the Park Board with an update on the pickleball project.

Construction of pickleball courts is funded in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for 2018. Due to available park dedication fees, it was possible to accelerate the construction schedule to start the project in the fall of 2017 in an effort to have the courts playable earlier in 2018.

The courts were designed and bids were received on August 3. Based on concept plans to build eight courts that were prepared in 2016, the estimated cost for construction was \$310,000. The lowest bid received was \$423,050.94, which well exceeded the budgeted amount. Bidding projects in the summer will sometimes yield higher bids as contractors have their workloads established for the remainder of the year. The bids were rejected, and the project will be bid again in January when the bidding will be expected to be much more competitive. Should the bids still exceed the amount budgeted in the CIP, staff will look at either recommending amending the CIP or scaling back the project to six courts instead of eight.

**Minnetonka Park Board Item 6  
Meeting of September 6, 2017**

<b>Subject:</b>	Park Ordinance Update
<b>Park Board related goal:</b>	N/A
<b>Park Board related objective:</b>	N/A
<b>Brief Description:</b>	Provide the Park Board with an update on the park regulations.

The ordinance to amend park regulations was introduced to the council on March 27, and was on the city council agenda for adoption on April 24, 2017. The ordinance was adopted except for the change regarding sledding, 1135.020 item 16. The council felt sledding should be an open activity and not regulated to specific areas. The language was therefore not changed and reads as follows: A person must not use a sled, toboggan, or other means of sliding on snow and ice in areas where this activity is prohibited by signs.

Staff met with the city attorney to review the city's liability, with three options to consider. 1) Leave the language as is; 2) remove all language pertaining to sledding from the ordinance; or 3) bring the item back to the park board to refine the language to prohibit downhill sledding in parks, but allow general use of sleds in other areas of the parks. In all three cases, the city's liability does not significantly change. As a result staff recommends not changing the ordinance, so the item has not been brought back to the park board for consideration.

**Minnetonka Park Board Item 7  
Meeting of September 6, 2017**

<b>Upcoming 6-Month Meeting Schedule</b>				
<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting Type</b>	<b>Agenda Business Items</b>	<b>Special Notes</b>
<b>Wed</b>	10/4/17	Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mountain Biking – Discuss Public Input Process</li> <li>Summer programming report</li> <li>Shady Oak Beach operations report</li> </ul>	
<b>Wed</b>	11/1/17	Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint meeting w/city council</li> <li>Volunteer recognition</li> </ul>	
<b>Wed</b>	12/6/17	Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of 2017 Farmer’s Market Operations and staff recommendations for 2018 operations</li> </ul>	
<b>Wed</b>	1/3/18	Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of 2018 Park Board Strategic Plan</li> </ul>	
<b>Wed</b>	2/7/18	Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	
<b>Wed</b>	3/7/18	Regular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of projects for the 2019-2023 Capital Improvement Program</li> </ul>	

**Other meetings and activities to note:**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Special Notes</b>
<b>Tues</b>	10/10/18	Fire Dept. & City Open House	5-8 p.m. Community Center

**Items to be scheduled:**