

## Minutes of the Minnetonka Park Board Meeting of February 5, 2020

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### 1. Call to Order

### 2. Roll Call

Park Board members in attendance included Elliot Berman, James Durbin, Nelson Evenrud, Chris Gabler, Elena Imaretska, David Ingraham, Ben Jacobs and Christopher Walick. Staff members in attendance included Darin Ellingson, Mike Funk, Kathy Kline, Kelly O'Dea, Mike Pavelka, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka.

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

### 2. Reports from Staff

Recreation Director, Kelly O'Dea introduced the new park board student representative, Elliot Berman. He is a junior at Hopkins High School. O'Dea introduced the new park board member David Ingraham. O'Dea introduced Natural Resources Manager, Leslie Yetka. Park board members gave a brief introduction about themselves.

O'Dea mentioned that meetings will be taking place in the Council Chambers during the police and fire renovation project. There is a possibility of meetings getting moved to a smaller room, however, that is still being discussed.

### 3. Approval of Minutes

Imaretska moved, Durbin seconded a motion to approve the meeting Minutes of November 13, 2019 as submitted. Gabler, Walick and Ingraham abstained. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Walick moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to approve the meeting Minutes of December 4, 2019 as submitted. Evenrud, Gabler and Ingraham abstained. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

### 4. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

None

### 5. Business Items

#### A. Review of Park Board Strategic Plan

O'Dea reported and asked for input.

Imaretska questioned making certain criteria or certain metrics and goals a little more objective like other strategic plans. Sometimes she struggles to determine and evaluate if they are making a difference and if they are being met. Imaretska recommended not changing the goals and objectives. However, she would like to hear from staff how they evaluate these or how they evaluate their own department and link that to discussed items. Sometimes they do not have the benchmarks and for her the missing piece is the

overarching big picture of how they are serving, what quality means and how it is getting evaluated. It would be helpful to see some of these metrics as they work towards it.

O'Dea responded that there has been a conversation recently about bringing the strategic plan back to the park board mid-year. At that point we can discuss if things we talked about in February and March are getting accomplished. Under the goals and objectives more measureable things could be added or specific things could be more detailed.

Imaretska asked staff to explain what they think quality recreational opportunities means and how the department thinks about it.

O'Dea outlined staff's main objectives that they think about with some of the programs and services that we provide:

- Are we providing quality programs for people of all ages and abilities?
- Do we offer a wide variety of programming?
- Do we meet the needs of our residents?

Durbin likes what Imaretska said about the objectives and measuring them. Maybe the objectives can't be quantitatively measured but could be qualitatively measured at the end of the year. At that point, the park board can see if goals and objectives are being met and if changes need to be made. If goals and objectives are not being met, more time and attention can be focused on them.

Ingraham thinks the vision and mission are good and that they make sense. Ingraham asked for clarity on what is meant by forum on the third bullet under the mission statement. He wondered if it was in which the citizens can have input or if they are trying to be more proactive and create the ability to engage them.

O'Dea responded that he thinks that is both. An example would be having open houses for the trail projects to receive public input; then also being proactive with updating the website's project page.

O'Dea moved onto the first goal: **To protect natural resources and open spaces.**

Ingraham asked what the open space process entails.

Yetka said the phrase open space process seems a little nebulous. Generally, the concept is that areas of land that are not designated as park land may be worth looking at acquiring for preservation purposes in terms of natural resources. While Minnetonka is primarily developed there are a few areas that are not developed and may be worth looking at to acquire and protect. A good example of this is the Cullen Nature Preserve. The city worked with the land owner in acquiring that parcel. It was then put into a conservation easement that's held by the Minnesota Land Trust. It is really in essence protecting that property in perpetuity for preservation of the natural resources and enjoyment of the community. The process is looking for opportunities and taking advantage of them to protect the natural resource areas that are not in private ownership and development.

O'Dea commented that there were no changes and asked for suggestions.

Walick thought the objectives and goals are general enough to allow for some flexibility but they are specific enough to highlight the priorities of Minnetonka, the departments and the projects. Throughout the year staff gives updates on things that often cover one or two objectives. He feels as though the park board is given updates and maybe that is on them to tie it back to the objectives.

Durbin stated that objective five is probably the most delicate one but likes that it is there. The balance of protecting natural resources with providing recreational opportunities and facilities is important to lay out. Building a trail or recreational facilities on parkland is disruptive. Anytime when construction crews come in, nature is going to be disturbed. If these things are done in a thoughtful way so nature can be restored afterwards, it doesn't completely alter the natural space. It will still have that feel we are looking for in Minnetonka and he thinks it is really important. Durbin believes that within the last couple years objective five has probably been the hardest objective for them to deal with and they have had to work really hard on.

O'Dea moved to the second goal – **To renew and maintain parks and trails.**

O'Dea reviewed numbers five and seven because they are new. O'Dea mentioned that during the joint meeting in November, HejlStone went through the placemaking in Opus. Staff provided an update as a link to the final report. Regarding objective seven, staff will come back to you because rules and regulations for this trail have to be set. That is going to be an important one as we look to build this trail in 2020.

Gabler thinks that number five fits into their role and what they do. Anything that starts to happen comes to the park board and we start the filtering process.

Imaretska asked if objective seven would come to the park board for feedback and a vote. Would council have to approve it or is it something that staff can just do?

O'Dea explained that this is kind of a unique situation that would not likely have to go to city council. If the rules don't change the park ordinance than it wouldn't have to go back to council. Staff is thinking of making changes that would not change the park ordinance.

Durbin asked if public feedback is going to be solicited extensively for objective seven.

O'Dea agreed that it would be a good thing to do.

Durbin noticed that objectives five, six and seven are not going to be permanent objectives and likes all of them. They are very concrete and should be able to measure them quantitatively.

Gabler said that objective seven reads "Lone Lake Park multi-use trail" and asked if that is synonymous with mountain bike trail?

O'Dea replied that it is and is being advertised as a multi-use so people know they are welcome to run or walk on the trail.

O'Dea moved on to the third goal – **To provide quality athletic and recreational facilities and programs.**

O'Dea explained that the only change made was under objective three. The word facilities was added to be more specific.

Imaretska heard the Mayor's speech at the State of the City. One of the topics he talked about was equity. Currently, it seems like that would be a big lens for the city and an area of effort. Imaretska wonders if some of the objectives should align with that lens of equity. She thinks it is already implied in objective six but suggests adding equity lens to the end of the sentence.

Durbin supported Imaretska's addition to objective six.

O'Dea moves to the fourth goal – **To enhance long-term park board development.**

O'Dea reviews that in objective three, farmers market was added to give people an idea of the types of events where it may be appropriate for the park board and/or the city council to provide an extra level of citizen engagement. Objective four was in the strategic plan a few years ago. There are dollars set aside to update the POST plan but it has not been done yet. The plan is to potentially join the natural resources division as they update one of their documents. Staff's goal was to update the document and ask the park board for feedback and suggestions as it is being worked on by a consultant.

Ingraham tried to find the POST plan online and only found one chapter. It was chapter seven of the 2030 comprehensive plan. Ingraham asked if that was what O'Dea was referring to or if there is something more than that.

O'Dea replied that the POST plan is about 17 years old and is more than one chapter. Part of the comprehensive plan is probably the park's chapter but we do have a different plan of parks, open space and trails. The POST plan gave some detailed information about parks but then also some general information about things such as active use and passive use. O'Dea isn't sure if it is online but a hard copy is in the recreation office.

Ingraham asked if it was an easy document to send out.

O'Dea thinks it could be sent out especially as it gets updated.

Gabler commented that in goal two, objective seven, the goal states the trail as the "Lone Lake Park multi-use trail." Using the word multi-use could lead to conflict because people start thinking of mountain bikes, regular bikes, walkers, runners all on a trail at the same time. Gabler thinks that should be more specific to a mountain bike trail.

Woeste responded that in the study and the council report the trail is referred to as a multi-use mountain bike trail. She will update the wording to match them.

Gabler said that would be good so people will know what it is.

Jacobs said he thinks multi-use is good because it allows some flexibility so more people could be there.

Ingraham said it is important because it was sold as people could still be able to walk on that trail. Theodore Wirth has that issue and they have rules around when you can walk and when you can bike on the trail.

O'Dea confirmed that staff changes are good. Staff is going to add mountain bike trail to objective seven of the second goal. The word equity will be added to objective six. Changes will be made and brought back to the March meeting for final approval.

**B. Review of 2019 athletic field use report**

Community Facilities Superintendent, Mike Pavelka gave the report.

Walick asked what a participant fee is.

Pavelka answered that it is for organizations for organized sports such as Tonka United soccer. The city would charge a participant fee so if the organization has 1,000 participants they might charge \$10 a person. Then that is extra revenue generated.

Walick asked if Pavelka has heard any feedback and if people were upset by the 10 percent increase.

Pavelka responded that there was not really any pushback. There hasn't been an increase since they went into effect for the most part so people understood. Some of the youth organizations asked more questions about it but they understood.

Jacobs asked about the condition of the fields and if there are no major renovations coming in the future.

Pavelka said at this point, there are no major renovations planned.

Imaretska questioned the number of hours especially at Gro Tonka and Oberlin. She is curious of the reason why it seemed like they were used far less than other fields. Is there something that should be discussed or considered? Also, how do these hours compare to capacity? Are we running out of space in some of these other fields that they are more heavily used?

Pavelka answered that everybody wants the time from 6-8 p.m. They could potentially be scheduled all day but nobody wants them at that time. For the time period of the schedules for organizations and when their seasons take place, he believes things are fine at this point. Field sports such as soccer may be a little shy. The regulation baseball field at Big Willow is at capacity. Pavelka explained that Gro Tonka and Oberlin are not dedicated fields and are not maintained to the level of the other fields. Gro Tonka is also used at times by picnic shelter reservations but there isn't a high demand for those fields.

Jacobs asked Pavelka if dedicated means certain organizations are using them on a regular basis.

Pavelka gave an example of the regulation baseball field at Big Willow. It is dedicated for baseball and is maintained as a game only field; so there is higher level of maintenance that goes into those fields.

Berman asked if there is any data specifically on which category of people use the fields. He also wondered if that was based on who purchased the field or if there is a process that identifies how many residents are in each activity to determine which category they are in.

Pavelka explained that for the most part it would need to be an organization that is based in either Hopkins district or Minnetonka district to be considered a resident category A. It is probably 80 percent or more of resident use, meaning organizations or city programs.

Ingraham asked if the objective when setting the fees is to cover the maintenance costs or to cover maintenance costs and to build a reserve.

Pavelka responded that initially it was to cover a small portion of the maintenance cost and to build some reserve for some special projects. Initially the fees were in to manage the fields better and to get better use out of them by organizations.

Ingraham asked if it is costing more to maintain the fields than the fees that are being recovered. If so, how is it absorbed?

Pavelka said it would be absorbed in the operating expense. For an hour or two game played by a nonresident, costs are probably covered. However, residents are not covering the costs.

Durbin likes keeping the fees as low as possible for what is mostly youth formal activities that are getting more expensive. Introducing a participant fee would be a hard sell. He would like to see the comparisons of the new and old calculations disappear. It gets confusing and there should be a point where it doesn't matter any longer.

Pavelka said their intent is to continue the new calculations going forward.

Gabler commented that the users are getting a bargain. He thinks most of the sports organizations would have no problem with a participant fee because maintaining fields now is extremely expensive. The city gets really good pricing, however, looking at Bennett Field it costs almost \$200,000 a year to maintain the fields. We don't want to run into the situation where it becomes too expensive to maintain the fields and then lose the quality of the fields. Big Willow is one of the better fields around and also the youth fields at Guillian. The soccer and softball fields are outstanding. Gabler thinks we should be proud of telling people that they are getting a bargain.

Evenrud agrees with Gabler and noted that over the years, the park board always wondered if we are charging enough. Even if fields are not charged enough; that is okay because Minnetonka has great fields.

Gabler moved, Walick seconded a motion to not have a fee increase this year. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

## **6. Park Board Member Reports**

Gabler congratulated staff for the quality of the play fields. Gabler travels half the country and everybody knows the fields in Minnetonka. He has never heard anybody disparage them and that is a big kudos to what staff does when visitors come. Minnetonka gets to host things because of the work staff does.

Pavelka added that his role is scheduling the fields and collecting the money. However, Ellingson and his staff does a great job at taking care of the fields.

Imaretska said that someone brought to her attention that there are families in swimming lessons at Williston who are not residents. She thought the Williston Center was only for residents so she asked for some clarification on that because those classes are in such high demand. Imaretska recommended a future discussion on that.

O'Dea replied that residency ties to memberships only. Residents of Minnetonka and St. Louis Park (due to a reciprocity agreement) are eligible for a Williston membership. Many of the programs that take place within the building do not require residency or a membership. There is a fee structure that supports the difference between a member and non-member, however, right now a nonresident could join some of those classes.

O'Dea continued that currently there is priority registration for certain leveled programs such as swimming, tennis and ice skating lessons. About a year and a half ago priority registration was discussed and the reasoning was to allow people to advance in those classes. It was frustrating for those who were in the program to not get into the next level because of the demand. That is something that could be discussed.

Imaretska thanked O'Dea for his clarification. She welcomes a discussion on that especially for aquatics. She feels like residents should have a priority to the offerings that have such a high demand.

Durbin stated that the Father/Daughter dance is Friday and he is looking forward to it. He had contact with staff over food allergies and got a quick response. He complimented staff on how they are trying to make sure that everybody at the dance has a great time. It just shines through everything that happens at the city and you kind of get that expectation that things are going to be really good. Next month he will give a report on how much fun him and his daughter had.

Berman said that he uses the swimming pools at Minnetonka Middle School East and Hopkins North Jr. High every day. He's not sure who they are directly managed by but they are sought over and they are great facilities to use.

O'Dea thanked Berman and said that the city works closely with the school districts. The school districts manage the facilities but due to the demand of swimming lessons the city tries to use them.

Evenrud thinks the city is kind of lucky because it seems like they collaborate and get along pretty well with the school districts. In other suburbs that is not always the case. Both the City of Minnetonka and the school districts have great facilities and they share them very well.

**7. Information Items**

**Gray's Bay Marina Report**

Pavelka reported on this.

**Recreation Services 2020 Summer Brochure**

Woeste reported on this and asked for suggestions on places to drop off brochures.

**Lone Lake Park Multi-Use Mountain Bike Trail**

Woeste reported on this.

**Opus Placemaking and Urban Design Guidelines**

Woeste reported on this and mentioned there will be more on this in the future.

**8. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items**

O'Dea reported and reminded park board members of the date change in April. The May meeting is the annual park board tour and it takes place on the second Wednesday of the month.

**9. Adjournment**

Walick motioned to adjourn, seconded by Jacobs. Evenrud adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.