

Minutes of the Minnetonka Park Board Meeting of June 3, 2020

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, Jeff Dulac, Mike Funk, Carol HejlStone, Kathy Kline, Kelly O'Dea, Christine Petersen, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka.

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

2. Reports from Staff

Recreation Director, Kelly O'Dea mentioned that the last Park Board meeting was in March. April's meeting and the annual park board tour were canceled due to the pandemic.

O'Dea added that two addendums were emailed to park board members today.

3. Approval of Minutes

Walick moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to approve the meeting Minutes of March 4, 2020 as submitted. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

4. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

Tony Wagner, 3516 Rainbow Dr, Minnetonka resident reached out to discuss the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that was reviewed by the park board in March and went to council in May. Wagner is interested in realignment of priorities associated with the Minnetonka Boulevard Trail that was scheduled for 2022-2023. The reason is there might be a better prioritized segment. That segment is number 10 in the plan, which is Fairchild to basically Woodcroft. This segment gets people almost to Groveland Elementary School. Schools are a very key part of that. The scoring in the original rating of the trail segments missed that this segment would contribute to the school, a village center and with a little bit of an adjustment to the alignment an extension to a park and ride. He believes the segment that goes to Fairchild has some alternative access and people can use the Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail (LRT) to get to Steel Street and then connect. He has discussed this with council member Bradley Schaeppi.

Park and Trail Planner, Carol HejlStone commented that there was a similar request during the study session for the CIP. The trails team is looking at what is entailed with swapping those two trail segments.

Imaretska asked HejlStone if there is a timeline on how to approach this study. She also asked when it would come back to the park board before it goes to city council.

HejlStone responded that the trails team will be reviewing it in the near future with the intent to really analyze what would need to be considered for either swapping the segment or not

swapping the segment. In the next week or two the trails team will meet and consider making further recommendations to you.

Evenrud added he has heard comments that east to west needs more work but north to south also needs help.

O'Dea replied that there will not be a meeting in July but there will be a meeting in August. Depending on the trails team recommendation, it will get back to the park board before going to council.

Walick commented that he lives in the Groveland area and this is not the first time that people have expressed this. People on the opposite side of Minnetonka Boulevard can't walk their kids to Groveland School when it is literally less than a mile away. This is also a school district issue but kids have to ride the bus to get to school safely. It is kind of a frustration and he is glad someone is bringing it up.

Imaretska has also heard comments so she is happy about taking a second look at it. It is important and aligns with the values of our residents and some of our goals.

David Haeg, 17045 Chiltern Hills Road, Minnetonka echoes a lot with what Wagner said. Haeg met with the principal at Groveland Elementary, who is relatively new to the role. They discussed biking access because Haeg is a cyclist and wants his kids to bike to school when they get older. Haeg thinks it isn't a very bike friendly intersection or area and the principal agreed. They talked about having a bike to school day and the principal sent out an update to parents that included a link for parents to show if they are interested. They had over 200 kids being represented by parents indicate that they want to do this. That is 25 percent of the school saying they are interested. That was followed up by more conversation with parents asking why there is not a crosswalk or sidewalk. There is tremendous appetite for this. Imaretska was correct saying it goes along with the values and it is worth looking at.

Evenrud added that we appreciate input on anything that ties to our values.

O'Dea reminded the park board that they discussed May as bike month. Unfortunately, many of the events were canceled. However, biking is very important to the community.

Durbin appreciates the comments from the callers. Groveland Elementary school is the only Minnetonka based elementary school/middle school that does not have good sidewalk access. Clear Springs Elementary, Scenic Heights Elementary and Minnetonka Middle School East have good access. Groveland Elementary and Minnetonka High School are equally not friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Evenrud replied that this goes along with Luke Van Santen's comment in March. He agrees with Durbin that not all schools are created equally with access from sidewalks and trails.

5. Business Items

A. Bryant Lake Regional Trail masterplan (Three River's Park District)

HejlStone introduced Kelly Grissman, Director of Planning and Danny McCullough, Regional Trail System Manager at Three Rivers Park District (TRPD). HejlStone gave background on the report.

Grissman noted that there are two different important TRPD initiatives that are happening within the city of Minnetonka. One of them is a new regional park search area and the other is a regional trail that we are working on a master plan for.

Grissman educated the park board about how a park or trail becomes a park or trail in the TRPD system. She discussed funding through the Met Council and working with community partners to figure out a master plan. Once there is a master plan, they work with community cities to do a cooperative agreement and then it goes into their five year CIP.

McCullough discussed the Eagle Lake to Bryant Lake Regional masterplan. He pointed out that the future trail would touch four communities (Maple Grove, Plymouth, Minnetonka and Eden Prairie). With a master plan they do a lot of work with cost estimation, figuring out exactly where they would like to see the alignment and receiving a lot of feedback from both park commission and the city council. Once they get a cooperative agreement, they will go for approval of the master plan. They are expecting to wrap this project up in early to middle of 2021 and enter into an agreement with the city at that time.

McCullough also mentioned that this corridor is roughly 16 miles and gave examples of trail amenities that they provide such as benches, trash cans bike repair stations and some wayfinding kiosks.

McCullough reviewed the West Metro Regional Trail Study that they started in 2017 and wrapped up in spring of 2019. That study primarily focused on public engagement in the four communities they were working with. They held 12 events for public engagement. They received a lot of comments from people wanting a trails on Baker Road and Williston Road, however, Baker Road was the center of conversation. There are a lot of families that are not comfortable biking with their children along Baker Road. There was also a demand for a north-south route.

As a result as that study we came up with a preferred alignment. The north segment begins at Eagle Lake Regional Park on the border of Maple Grove and Plymouth, the trail goes south along Zachary Lane and almost touches French Regional Park and almost touches Bassett Regional Park that runs east – west. The trail then goes along the east side of Medicine Lake and would cross at Highway 55 at South Shore Drive. It then connects to County Road 73/Hopkins Crossroad at the Plymouth Transit Hub. Then it will go to the north side of Crane Lake and would follow Ridgedale Drive to the new trail on Plymouth Road. It would then intersect with the LRT to Baker Road, then to Rowland Road as you cross into Eden Prairie at 62 into Bryant Regional Park.

Berman commented that there are plans for two parks in the Ridgedale area and it looks like this regional trail would be going through that area. He asked if the trail would take up park or road space.

McCullough responded that they are interested in connecting local parks on their system in places where it makes sense.

Hej|Stone explained that there are park improvements planned for the area adjacent to Crane Lake Preserve. The regional trail would wrap around the south side of Ridgedale

Drive along the newly constructed trail. It would not touch the new park at Ridgedale, however, there would be crossing directly from the trail to the new park. The trail would continue to Plymouth Road and the existing city trail that is there.

McCullough reminded the park board that this is an introduction to the project. They are showing a general alignment that made sense based on the study and was constructed by a lot of public input.

McCullough explained that the south end of the trail would serve as a trail head. This connects to the LRT and could bring you to Minneapolis. They hope at some point there will be a connection to the Dakota Regional Trail in Wayzata.

Maggie Heurung, Associate Planner with Three Rivers Park District explained the project's process. They will be introducing the project to the Minnetonka City Council later this month and will check back with the Minnetonka Park Board in September after evaluating the alignment and conducting the bulk of their public engagement. At that time they will provide the park board with more finalized recommendations for the alignment. Then they will go through the necessary steps with Minnetonka City Council for feedback and approval before they bring the master plan to Met Council.

Heurung added that some of the specifics within the timeline may change due to the pandemic. Luckily, most of the public engagement was done during the West Metro Trail Study. Some public engagement will be done from their website through an interactive map and survey. They also hope to use Minnetonka's engagement tools such as *The Memo* and social media. They will have also need to engage the residents specifically along Baker Road possibly with a virtual open house.

Ingraham asked if Three Rivers could have a park installed in Minnetonka.

Grissman responded yes but because Minnetonka is fully developed, they will have to be creative and it won't be the same as a French or Bryant Regional Park. It most likely will build off the infrastructure or the public spaces that Minnetonka already has. The absolute goal would be to provide amenities in a regional fashion within your city directly. The obvious choice would be along Minnehaha Corridor. They city has already done a great job securing a bunch of land and preserving it. With a regional trail there, it is operated more on a regional level instead of each municipality. It suddenly will have a different type of significance and it has a bigger draw into your community.

Imaretska is so excited about these ideas, especially about the trails. It seems like the timeline for the trail is pretty set but it is still up in the air for the park. Imaretska requested that they talk more about the steps and community engagement on that specific piece.

Grissman said they will spend the next year working with your staff to just better understand the opportunities within the city already. The project probably won't kick off for another year or two years. At that point they would discuss the partnership between them and the city and discuss public engagement. The master plan wouldn't really start for another year or two and that would be a year-long process with quite a bit of community engagement. It could be then in short order that some of these changes start happening where you see a bigger Three Rivers presence in your community.

Imaretska requested that they share any specific ideas on how the park board can be helpful in those explorations.

Walick is very excited about the possibility of connecting all the areas, having more trails and having partnerships. He asked how this falls in terms of priorities.

Grissman said they probably operate similar to the city in that there are different levels of planning or different levels of implementation. Some things compete against each other for resources and other things are very separate. In terms of planning both of these projects, they are high priority. The regional trail corridor is already funded in terms of completing the master plan. Just getting the route in place and all the community engagement done and all the approvals aligning the cities, Three Rivers and the Met Councils. TRPD wants to partner so they shifted some projects around to align with the city's priorities.

Grissman explained that the search area is a brand new idea for TRPD so again that master plan is probably a starting in a year to two years and then it would take a year to complete. As soon as they have a master plan and a pretty solid agreement in place, then they start putting things in their five year CIP. The great thing about the trail route is that so much is already in place so it is just connecting gaps and it is more easily funded.

Ingraham said the idea of a Three Rivers park in Minnetonka is exciting. Minnehaha Corridor is a great idea but he's interested to see how that comes together. Ingraham thinks the linkage is spectacular and the sooner it gets done the better. He thinks if a trail is near the Plymouth Road trail that it will get used heavily. Ingraham questioned the size of the large sidewalk between Minnetonka Mills and Ridgedale because he thinks it isn't sized for fast bike traffic. He is wondering if the volume and velocity there might be a little different.

McCullough replied that if they decide that a trail should be aligned with the south side of the road around Ridgedale Mall and Ridgedale Drive that they would want the existing sidewalk to be turned into their 10 foot wide paved regional trail standard.

Ingraham responded that he is not sure if the new trail that was just built south of Ridgedale along Plymouth Road meets their standard.

McCullough commented that it does meet their standards for the most part, however, there are some right of way constraints. Their minimum standard is a 10 foot wide paved trail with a three foot clear zone on each side. Sometimes they have to go down to an eight foot wide trail where there are constraints. Anytime Hennepin County builds a trail on a county road, if they know it may become a regional trail, they typically try to build it to TRPD's standard as best as possible. Around Ridgedale, they would prefer that to be a paved trail instead of a city sidewalk that exists there now.

Durbin is excited about exploration of Three Rivers Park inside Minnetonka. He agrees with the alignment as a priority with Baker Road over Williston Road. As Baker is a county road that goes over Highway 7 so it would be a little more of a continuous path. He thinks trails lose some of their usefulness when people have to stop at a stoplight. Durbin thinks Williston needs something, however, he appreciates the priority with Baker Road and how it can connect especially going north of the city. Durbin also requested a

higher resolution map next time so they can see where Ridgedale Mall, parks, trails and points of interest would link up.

Grissman said they will do better with the map next time.

Jacobs thinks this will be great. He lives on Baker Road and Rowland Road. In the last month he has had two neighbors talk to him about when a trail will go in there. Cars go so fast that kids can't get to other trails. He thinks when they have the forum that a lot of people will give input.

Gabler loves the idea of the trail. He will be interested in how the engagement goes especially with Minnehaha corridor for a regional park. Gabler asked what the relationship is between TRPD and the Met Council and how would they be involved?

Grissman answered that TRPD is one of 10 regional park implementing agencies within the Twin Cities. All of them have to comply with the Met Council's regional policy plans. All of their plans, including the park master plans get sent to the Met Council and they review it and approve it. Once approved, it allows TRPD to be eligible for acquisition funding, development funding as well as operational maintenance funding through the Met Council. The Met Council is the fiscal agent for a lot of state money that comes into the metro and they distributed it to the 10 regional park implementing agencies. It is really imperative that their search area goals fall into their policy plans and that we follow up with these critical master plans. Otherwise, both the state and the regional money from the Met Council are cut off. That is one funding source for TRPD, but it is still critical for moving a lot of projects forward.

Durbin mentioned that since the weather is nice, maybe TRPD can do some public engagement at the city's outdoor events such as the farmers market. He thinks people would be pretty amicable with coming up and talking. Once it gets colder out, virtual meetings could take place. He would rather be in-person than be virtual. He suggested they might get better feedback if they can have a conversation in-person.

McCullough responded that they would love to go to the farmers market. He asked if there are other public engagement opportunities that they can attend.

Imaretska added that herself, Jacobs and Durbin are part of a run club in Minnetonka. She offered their expertise on the trails and roads in Minnetonka.

McCullough responded that the West Metro Study did quite a bit of public engagement to the broader community. They will still do more engagement as part of this process but their focus will be on those residents along Baker Road because they will be directly impacted.

Imaretska wanted to elevate one area in the trail where the trail would cross Minnetonka Boulevard. She thinks that is an interesting area to think about because it can be congested with traffic because there are different restaurants and businesses there. Imaretska thinks it is an opportunity to think of how to make the crossing safe. That is the beginning of Baker Road so there is an interesting opportunity for engagement even in that area.

HejlStone commented that they will be working closely with TRPD staff to identify as many opportunities as they are able for residents to really provide a good amount of feedback in a safe manor.

Evenrud asked how close this trail would be to the future Southwest LRT coming in Hopkins around Shady Oak Road and Excelsior.

McCullough said it will come close but he doesn't think people will be able to see it. He thinks the light rail will be just east of their desired alignment.

Ingraham added that someone wouldn't be able to pick it up off the trail that goes down to Lake Riley. The crossing would be at Rowland Road.

McCullough said that is correct. The Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail, which leads into Hopkins goes right through the Shady Oak Road Station that is planned there. So that is a connection and it would connect in that way. There would be a connection point at Rowland Road.

Evenrud added that it also links up to the potential sidewalk that is going in on Excelsior Boulevard.

B. Park Ordinance Amendment related to the Mayors Monarch Pledge

Leslie Yetka, Natural Resources Manager gave the background of the report.

Imaretska asked if the raising of caterpillars is really useful and if it is helpful to the monarch population.

Yetka responded that information has come out in the last few years about the decline in monarch caterpillars and monarch butterflies. A lot of the calls they receive are about whether or not monarch caterpillars can be hand-reared and released. Some recent information has come out saying that reared-monarchs may not be quite as fit as wild monarchs. Also, their ability to migrate is somewhat harmed by hand-rearing. Two good places to get more information about this is the Xerces Society and the Monarch Joint Venture. Research is demonstrating or educating people that the most effective way to help monarch populations is to ensure we have that habitat. Making sure we have milkweed plants because that is their sole source of food. If people want to rear, they can do that in a small scale of no more than 10 caterpillars in a season. If the population is suddenly high, they may not have enough food.

Imaretska thinks there is an opportunity in educating this. She is interested in how can they support people with creating the habitat. Maybe that is through sharing seeds that have been connected in our parks.

Yetka added that the city usually hosts a pollinator field day in the summer, which was delayed this year. Staff provides education on specifically monarchs and monarch's life cycle. They also sell native plants and she believes in the past they've had opportunities for kids to work with seeds such as creating seed balls. Our goal was to continue that work this summer not only at the pollinator field day but also at the farmers markets. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic those plans have changed.

Gabler asked if Yetka wanted the park board to look at wording in the ordinance and provide feedback. He says it spells things out a lot simpler than the language that was struck out. He likes the revised wording in the ordinance.

Durbin liked the wording changes. He is wondering how people will know about the changes to the ordinance and how it will be enforced. There are many residents that don't know the ordinances that are already in place. How are we as a city going to use this ordinance to get citizens and park visitors to follow this?

Yetka answered that it comes down to communications and outreach. This is kind of a complaint-based ordinance. An example is if staff receives a call saying that someone is collecting plants in a park, because the ordinance says collect, staff can then say that collecting plants is not allowed. The language in the actual ordinance helps staff as they respond to calls and issues that come up. In terms of the broader concept of wanting to protect and preserve our park spaces and our natural habitat, this is why it is important that we do that.

Ingraham is in support of the language in the ordinance. His household is maybe in the outlier of very passionate monarch raisers. As long as the ordinance relates to the city parks and not the ability to clip milkweed in the common spaces such as along the roads it is not a big deal to them.

Ingraham's response to Imaretska's earlier question about what can be done to encourage the growth of monarch's, he thinks it might deal with the following:

1. Pesticides: The kinds of pesticides that are used or not used by the city and by other people. As recently as four years ago, nurseries were still selling milkweed for people to plant for monarchs. That was traded with neonicotinoids so you are really buying a plant that really won't do any good.
2. Mowing: The other thing is mowing. When the milkweed patches are mowed along the roadways right after the first arriving generation plants their eggs, those eggs are worthless at that point. That is because they will hatch in the ground and there is no place for them to go up to do their chrysalis.
3. Awareness: His wife has shared her passion with a lot of people that don't go on to raise monarchs but they do plant gardens and get into the idea of pollinators.

Ingraham also remembers that teachers would take school kids to the parks and collect the caterpillars to try and raise them in the classroom. He isn't sure if that is intended to be prohibited or not but he would suggest that as a way of increasing the awareness and the interest in it.

Yetka said in terms of teachers and educational opportunities, people may be bringing a class out and the intent is that staff would really discourage it. This ordinance would not allow collection, but it is about keeping that habitat and ecosystem intact as much as possible. Staff would encourage teachers to find other ways to educate about insects and life-cycles. Certainly if staff is working with teachers they can help them with any opportunities to teach students about that.

Imaretska thinks it makes sense to include insects and wild life. She thinks it will be interesting to see what kind of public comment they receive about the vegetation

collection because there is a movement of sort of foraging and venturing out to get various things and she doesn't necessarily see that as a bad thing. One thing to consider is maybe excluding some items, as an example, fruits specifically mentioned in the ordinance. Imaretska questioned if it is necessary when talking about monarchs. There are wild raspberries in some of our parks but she doesn't know if there are a lot of fruit trees. Imaretska commented that when ordinances are changed it is kind of long-term so we need to be thoughtful about it. She's aware that they are doing it for the monarchs and insects but what does it mean in the larger picture.

Walick asked if actively growing things or items that falls off trees included in that definition.

Yetka answered that the primary intent here is to protect live vegetation. They are not looking to crack down on dead material that was already dead such as fallen sticks or pinecones. Staff recognizes that as part of the habitat and often an important part of the habitat. There would be some flexibility in terms of how we would interpret this.

Ingraham commented that we are really interested in collecting garlic mustard, buckthorn, etc. He asked if that is excluded or covered so you can still as an organized event collect those.

Yetka replied that Ingraham is correct and those are listed on the state noxious weed list. Those are special circumstances where they can be removed.

Ingraham commented that a new change in the ordinance states that vegetation means all plant parts. He remembers reading somewhere that there is a reference "can't be taken unless by city regulation" which he thinks most weed removal is.

Yetka responded that is correct and a good point. She will make sure it is clear in the language or elsewhere. Natural Resources does a lot of outreach regarding garlic mustard and buckthorn and invasive species management. That is an instance where vegetation is being removed so we want to make sure we can still do that.

Darin Ellingson, Street and Park Operations Manager said that number four under damaged park property talks about a person must not cut, burn, damage, remove except as permitted by the city.

Gabler moved, Walick seconded a motion to approve the ordinance amendments. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

C. Natural Resources Division's Education and Outreach Plan

Christine Petersen, Natural Resources gave the report.

Ingraham is interested in the tree trek and thinks that is a great idea.

Petersen recommended being on their email list to learn about things when they are initiated.

Evenrud complimented their presentation and said they did a great job putting things in a good format for everyone to understand.

Imaretska was happy staff put the garlic mustard workshop on YouTube. She will watch it and spread the word. Imaretska asked if NextDoor is being used for social media.

Petersen replied that they are in the process of making videos for tree planting and emerald ash borer awareness through the Hennepin County grant. Nextdoor isn't a city staff approved platform in-part because staff can't see the responses. Staff is trying to get people to view their publications and then make things available such as handouts so they can share through Nextdoor and other private platforms. Staff would like getting more people to read the e-blasts.

Imaretska remarked that maybe park board members could go on Nextdoor and post links to their pages. Nextdoor is very popular in her neighborhood. For the farmers market, she thought maybe there are different strategies to distribute information since you can't be there in-person.

Petersen replied that they have been in contact with the farmer's market manager about the possibility of having a display with extra copies of inserts or handouts.

Imaretska stated that since it is nice out that people are out quite a bit at parks and trails. She thinks there are ways to alter the volunteering of removal of invasive species. People could do it being socially distant in a less supervised way. She thinks that might be a good way to gain volunteers and remove invasive species. Residents could easily spot them and remove them.

Petersen would have to talk to Janet VanSloun, Natural Resources Specialist to know how that she is addressing that. There is a contractor continuing to do some of that work and that is helpful in terms of management. Volunteers are typically trained before they do invasive species removal. Staff has been letting some people know about opportunities for citizen science. Even though staff can't hold volunteer events, they can point people towards some ways to make a difference on their own property or in their neighborhood.

6. Park Board Member Reports

Gabler asked if there is a way to get minor maintenance at the Gro Tonka's softball fields. He thinks there will be more of a need for them and will get used heavily.

Ellingson replied that they can look at it. With COVID-19 they are missing three crews so the whole parks staff is generally mowing or doing other things. Those things are on a longer list of things to get to.

Durbin commented that he doesn't know what they would do if there wasn't such a good trail system in Minnetonka. Everyone is on the trails and now that playgrounds are open people are using these facilities extensively. People will probably lean heavily on our parks because camps and activities are canceled. Durbin thinks the parks will be used a lot this year. Staff probably can see there is an increase in our trail system already.

Imaretska is seeing an increase in traffic almost every day on the LRT. She requested more porta-potties on the trails because more families and people are using them. Also, she was on the Luce Line Trail and saw wonderful signage in the city of Wayzata. The signs showed where the trails go and where they connect. They also list different amenities and businesses in the area. She thought maybe there should be better signage along the LRT and the new trails we are talking about. We want to give people a better view of where they are and what businesses are around them.

Evenrud said a state and national trend is what is available for people right now. His teenagers are showing interest in going to parks now, which they didn't before.

7. Information Items

COVID-19 Program Update

O'Dea reported.

Lone Lake Park Multi-Use Trail

Sara Woeste, Assistant Recreation Director reported.

Tennis court reconstruction

Ellingson reported.

Robinwood Park

Ellingson reported.

8. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea reported and added that the farmers market begins on June 9, 2020.

9. Adjournment

Walick motioned to adjourn, seconded by Gabler. Evenrud adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.