

Minutes of the Minnetonka Park Board Meeting of August 5, 2020

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Park Board Members Present: Nelson Evenrud, Chris Gabler, Elena Imaretska, David Ingraham, Ben Jacobs and Christopher Walick. Student member: Elliot Berman.

Excused: James Durbin.

Staff members in attendance: Jeff Dulac, Mike Funk, Carol HejlStone, Jesse Izquierdo, Kathy Kline, Kelly O'Dea, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka.

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

3. Reports from Staff

Recreation Director, Kelly O'Dea updated park board members that staff will be calling roll individually on any item requiring a vote including the minutes and business items.

O'Dea mentioned that an addendum was emailed to park board members. The addendum includes received feedback on Business Item B; which is the consideration of a potential trail segment swap along Minnetonka Boulevard.

4. Approval of Minutes

Walick moved, Ingraham seconded a motion to approve the meeting Minutes of June 3, 2020 as submitted. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

Bobbi Hoebelheinrich on behalf of Tonka United Soccer Association suggested adding Futsal lines to tennis courts that are getting resurfaced. Futsal is five-a-side soccer on hard surfaces. Target Corporation is going around the country and installing these, especially in more inner-cities. They did a co-op with Minnesota United in St. Paul and advised that surfaces not to be used for just tennis or basketball. It serves more of a diverse population both in interest and in culture. They play futsal during the winter months only because that is the only time they can find a place to play. In terms of development, we partner with Hopkins Community Ed in the winter for their after-school outreach program. They hoped to do that this summer but were not able to due to COVID-19. This is an opportunity for the city to look at how citizens or community youth could use the tennis courts in another way when the courts are not being used for tennis.

Walick has never heard of Futsal but thinks it sounds interesting. He believes that any interest that people have in doing outdoor sports; the board should look into especially when existing structures can be utilized.

Evenrud has a little experience with combining activities such as tennis and futsal. One thing that comes to his mind is keeping the lines correct and workable for all different groups. He would definitely be interested in exploring it.

Imaretska is interested in learning more about this. She is a big advocate for looking at existing infrastructure and how to maximize its use for the most diverse populations.

Gabler mentioned that Hoebelheinrich said this is primarily played in the winter. He wanted to clarify that she is talking about outdoor tennis courts. Gabler asked if this would be organized or a place to play pick-up games.

Hoebelheinrich would like to use it for both organized and pick-up games. She added that regarding the lines, the outside dimensions are the same as tennis. Hoebelheinrich said this would be used for outdoors. They play indoors in the winter just because that's the only time they are able to play.

Berman has played Futsal and the issue is that tennis courts have nets. He doesn't think that a tennis court can also act as a Futsal court. There would be multiple line dimensions and there would have to be a maneuverable net and posts on the sides. Then of course there would have to be goals on either side of the Futsal court. That is just a logistic thing that the city would have to look at. Maybe one court can be a designated Futsal court.

6. Business Items

A. Lone Lake Park multi-use mountain bike trail usage policy and metrics

O'Dea stated that on Wednesday, Aug. 5, the city learned the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) intends to take legal action if within 60 days the city does not apply for an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) and develop a habitat conservation plan pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act regarding the rusty patch bumblebee and the city's mountain bike trail in Lone Lake Park.

Although the CBD asserts that an ITP is required, the city is still collecting the information necessary to make that determination.

The city is currently developing a mitigation plan to identify and address potential impacts to the rusty patch bumble bee and any habitat in the area of the mountain bike trail. The city hired Barr Engineering to prepare a biological assessment of the area and the University of Minnesota is conducting a bee survey. The city also continues to consult closely in this effort with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the federal agency that oversees implementation of Endangered Species Act requirements.

Once these assessments are complete, the city will be able to make a responsible, informed decision regarding whether federal law requires an ITP and habitat conservation plan in addition to the city's current mitigation plans for the bees.

Woeste gave the staff report.

Walick complimented staff on the metrics section and keeping track of various concerns people had. Environmental impact was a big topic with this trail and staff was measuring things such as lake quality and keeping track of the Rusty Patch Bumblebee. Walick

wondered if staff would keep track of other aspects that could potentially impact the environment over time such as erosion.

Woeste responded that erosion was one of the things staff was going to track. Below are some things that will be tracked related to environmental impact:

- Erosion and maintenance on erosion
- Diseased trees
- Water quality
- Invasive species along the corridor

Gabler was curious how hiking and running will interact with biking on the same trail.

Woeste answered that it can be done. The trail is being built primarily as a mountain bike trail but staff didn't want to exclude runners and hikers from using the trail. Also, throughout the process staff has stated this will be a self-select trail. Woeste has ran on mountain bike trails before. She said that it works, but there has to be communication by the biker if they are coming up behind someone on foot and the person on foot may have to step off the trail. If a walker or hiker doesn't feel safe then there are other trails in the park they can use. There are many trails that are multi-use and most bikers are used to coming up on someone on foot. They just announce their approach and go by.

Gabler added that he sees bikes all the time on the trails. He was worried that the mountain bike trail is pretty narrow and when someone communicates they are coming on the left, there may not be room to move out of the way.

Woeste responded that people generally have to step off and step back on the trail.

Evenrud was wondering the same thing. He has a feeling that maybe a mountain bike trail won't be a runner's favorite trail to run on.

Ingraham said this was very well done and very comprehensive. He likes the comment about opening and closing the trail based on weather because of potential damage from riding on muddy trails. Ingraham asked if there will be actual gates at the trail.

Woeste responded that there will be a gate as a visual cue. There will also be a sign on the gate saying the trail is closed to all users.

Ingraham asked if there will be a gate at both ends of the trail. One at Rowland Road and the other by the tennis courts.

Woeste answered that there will be at least three gates. They will be located in spots that have been identified.

Ingraham was a little concerned about not allowing hiking and running during the winter. However, the example given regarding grooming for bikes helps Ingraham understand that better. Ingraham really likes the Three Rivers Park District rules stating, "Hikers yield to bikes, bikers yield to faster bikes and bikers announce." The reasoning is if it is on the rules, it helps establish this as a bike trail. It's telling people that they are welcome to use it but they have to yield to bikes. He thinks it helps mitigate any disagreement on

the trail. A hiker may comment to a biker that they have the same right to use the trail but the rule will state that hikers yield to bikes.

Ingraham spends a lot of time walking dogs at Lone Lake. He believes the rule should be no retractable leashes, not just six feet. Most people don't keep their retractable leash at six feet. Ingraham thinks a big fear for bikers on a trail is the accordion effect of the person that has their dog out to the end of the retractable leash. His suggestion is to make it clear and say no retractable leashes. Ingraham suggested in metrics, adding dogs present as one of the periodic trail counts. The reason being, if the periodic count showed there aren't many dogs on the trail, staff can then decide if dogs should be allowed. Ingraham added that he can have his dog in an unapproved, unmaintained area that will be four to five feet from the trail. However, the informal trails have been removed and there are maintained trails nearby. He thinks there will be an issue regarding this like there is at Purgatory Park. He requested to make the language clear on how to keep your dog away from the maintained trail.

Gabler likes the discussion on e-bikes because he thinks that will come back around. As he learned e-bikes are not created equal. His neighbors bought one that is a fat tire e-bike that will go 35 mph with no pedaling and another one that requires pedaling but gives the electric assistance. Gabler thinks the topic on what e-bikes are eligible will return.

Woeste replied that comment was also made by someone providing feedback. If e-bikes would be allowed in the future or at this time; it should also be a pedal assist bike specific to mountain biking. A narrow tire could do damage to the trail and be unsafe.

Walick asked if the plan is to post all 13 trailhead rules on one side. He thinks the smaller the text and the more information on there, the less likely that people will read all of it. If you had just a few important things it may be more likely to catch their eye.

Woeste said they are proposing to use all this language. Based on all the feedback staff received, people wanted to see more information there. The good thing is that trailhead kiosks can be fairly large and more readable.

Imaretska commended staff for the intention, attention and effort that they have put into engaging the main stakeholders and really thinking this through. It looks really good and she is really happy with the level of engagement and the process of how they ended up here. Imaretska was wondering what happens if someone gets caught on the trail when the trail is closed. If somebody sees someone using the trail when it is closed, what should they do? Would the city send someone out or would they get a ticket? She is curious of the enforcement of the rules.

Woeste replied that hopefully educating someone of the rules would be done before someone arrived. Hopefully, if someone saw a user on the trail when the trail is closed, they would educate them on why it is important to stay off the trail. Enforcement is a challenge especially for people who just aren't abiding by trail signage in any park. Certainly, if it was somebody that was repeatedly doing it, staff would like to have a discussion with that person. People can report it to city staff or the land manager and staff will try to address it.

Imaretska said there should be a communication strategy that includes education pieces such as how to use the trail or when to use the trail. She hopes the communication team and the stakeholder teams can get information out there. Imaretska thinks there are some fun ways to educate the community on how to best use the trail. It was discussed that there are some other ways to use the kiosk, such as noting when there is high traffic or when teams are using it. Perhaps the park board can help brainstorm ideas when the time is right for the communications piece.

Ingraham questioned the parking lot counts and periodic trail counts. If someone is there doing those counts, it would be interesting to periodically gather information about the people visiting the trail. Some examples of information would be: are they biking or driving to the trail, are they residents or nonresidents and from what distance did they travel.

Imaretska asked the board what their thoughts are about the retractable leash. She thinks that is a very valid comment that Ingraham made. Imaretska thinks that is a very important safety piece.

Walick favors keeping rules as consistent across the parks as much as possible. In terms of the retractable leash, he thinks it is something to keep track of and see if it needs to be changed.

Woeste suggested adding it to the posted trailhead rules. The trailhead rules could read, "dogs must be kept on a leash no longer than six feet; no retractable leashes." Then it's on the trailhead sign but it doesn't change the ordinance in any way.

Evenrud commented that if they took that advice, the goal can be accomplished without doing a motion.

Woeste responded that they could motion to approve it as-is, with the addition of that language on rule number 11 getting posted on the trailhead rules.

Imaretska is in favor of that.

Ingraham says it comes back to policy and rules of eight and nine. Going back to who has the right-of-way. He thinks it is worth considering having a statement saying it is primarily a mountain bike trail and walkers and hikers are allowed to use it. He wants something to make it clear that mountain bikes have the right-of-way on the trail. Otherwise there could be some disputes on the trail about who is supposed to yield.

Woeste added that there has been a lot of discussion on yielding and how to word right-of-way over the last year. Someone might feel like they have the right-of-way over the other. Maybe add to number eight, "bikers have the right of way, announce your approach and yield to others." A similar rule is the Three Rivers rule stating, "Hikers yield to bikers, bikers yield to faster bikers and bikers announce approach to others". It sounded like Ingraham was proposing the language similar to Three Rivers. Staff is open to changing the language on how to yield to others.

Izquierdo thinks trying to be concise with plain language is possible. There has been some concern from the community about usage on the bike trail. They are wanting to make sure it is clear that it is a mountain bike trail that is open for other use and for

people to self-select if they want to use it. As far as specific language on yielding and working that into the rules; he thinks it is a valid discussion because it could decrease conflict along the trail.

Evenrud said the city is trying to be inclusive to several groups without being exclusive so it won't be easy. He is confident with using the language on the front. Everything won't be figured out now but all these questions will get us there.

Imaretska said the current language is worth trying. She likes the language saying announce your approach, yield to others and slow traffic right. It is pretty simple language. Thinking back to the communication strategy, it will be important to educate that it is a mountain bike trail. In terms of posted rules, this seems pretty universal and inclusive so she thinks it is worth trying. Pairing it with the communications strategy will hopefully bring us the results that we hope for.

Gabler moved, Imaretska seconded a motion to accept the document as-is with the addition of verbiage not allowing retractable leashes. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

B. Consideration of potential trail segment swap along Minnetonka Boulevard

Carol HejlStone, Park and Trail Planner reported. She mentioned that unfortunately a slightly outdated version of the report was included in the packet. The difference is the recommendation. We received a request from council member Brad Schaeppi and several residents to consider the potential to swap two segments that are included within the city's trail improvement plan so that is what we will be discussing tonight. To consider the proposal to swap trail segment number 10, which is along Minnetonka Boulevard from Fairchild Avenue to Groveland Elementary with the segment number four which is currently programmed for 2022 that is along Minnetonka Boulevard from the Marsh to Fairchild Avenue.

Walick thinks people will be happy with building a trail to Groveland Elementary as soon as possible.

Jacobs thinks it makes sense and it will get more use in that area than the other portion. He thinks staff did a nice job and that it was a good decision.

Imaretska agrees and is thrilled for all the kids and families that go to Groveland Elementary School. However, she read the feedback by the people that will be impacted by the swap and she hears their concern and feels for them. From personal experience and looking at the segment, there is a very dangerous curve in the road. She is wondering if it is possible to extend segment 10 to Steel Street. If that can happen, it would mitigate the dangerous curve so there would still be a trail which would help all users. In a way, that would connect because Steel Street is connected to the Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail (LRT). That would really complete the loop and help with traffic connecting to Groveland Elementary School. Since the two segments are not identical in costs or in length, Imaretska is wondering if there is an opportunity to extend the segment to Steel Street.

HejlStone replied that is a great question and said that staff can look into it. There is a little bit of background in looking into what that would entail in terms of utilities, in terms of coordination with outside stakeholders and how that would impact either project.

Gabler said he is thinking of this part of a trail that starts at Fairchild. Part of the trail is just on the north side of Minnetonka Boulevard that comes out around Prospect Place. It kind of comes up and goes around Gro Tonka Park and then goes into Groveland Elementary School. That trail does not get used that much and he is on it all the time. He is wondering if that could be a compromise going forward. It seems like there is a finished trail that basically meets what you are trying to do unless you want the trail on Minnetonka Boulevard.

HejlStone said yes both segments are both along Minnetonka Boulevard. There may be some separation on grass and pavement similar to Plymouth Road.

O'Dea asked HejlStone to clarify the segment change.

HejlStone responded that both segments up for consideration this evening would be right along Minnetonka Boulevard. In some locations, there would be separation between four foot grassy boulevard and in others more concrete maintenance strip; very similar to the trail that was recently implemented along Plymouth Road. That would be a very good example of what the improvements for each of these segments would be along Minnetonka Boulevard.

O'Dea wanted to clarify that we are looking at segments four and 10. It's not necessarily a swap where 10 goes to four and four goes to 10. Ten moves up but four doesn't go all the way down.

HejlStone said that is correct. The recommendation really again is to bump segment number 10 up to 2023 with the intent to shift what is currently segment four out to 2026.

Ingraham seconded Imaretska's idea if it is at all feasible to extend to Steel Street. That is a tricky corner for driving or walking. It looks like it is about 600 feet, which is not a small number when you get in a project but it would be pretty nice. There has been talk about sidewalks by the school. Is that an issue the city can just do or since it is a county road, does the county have to take care of it?

HejlStone answered that we coordinate closely with our partner agency stakeholders including Hennepin County, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Met Council and Metro Transit. Certainly we always coordinate intersection improvements with the county as well. There are standards and guidelines to consider for brand new section improvements and there is also considerations. We would continue to coordinate with Hennepin County around those improvements.

Evenrud opened it for public comment.

Katherine (Kate) Wagner, 3516 Rainbow Dr., Minnetonka. Will be in fourth grade at Groveland Elementary this fall. She will be sharing her thoughts on Minnetonka Boulevard trails. The reason she doesn't ride on Minnetonka Boulevard is because she is scared for herself and her younger brother. So many of her friends live east of Groveland and each of us would like a safer way to school and to each other's house. She would love to have more trails throughout Minnetonka but she thinks this section is really important. There are 900 kids that go to school at Groveland Elementary and this trail would help many families walk and bike to school. She thinks there should be a

crosswalk from Groveland to Rainbow Drive. She feels unsafe even though her dad helps them across the road. The reason she wants this trail is for the safety of her brother, her neighbors, her family, her friends and all the future Groveland Elementary kids. Wagner thanked the park board and staff for listening. She hopes they share her same thoughts that the trail to Groveland Elementary is the most important.

Evenrud thanked Wagner and said it was very impactful and appreciates the input.

Walick thanked Wagner for calling in and said it is nice to hear from people that would be using the trail. He is in support with swapping the segments.

Imaretska went back to extending segment number 10 because she thinks that is a very important consideration. Imaretska asked if they can indicate that they would like to extend segment 10 as part of the consideration if other park board members believe it would be important to consider it for safety.

O'Dea replied that it is an appropriate motion and that staff would bring the pros and cons to the council which may be financial constraints. It is appropriate that the council knows that you are wanting to switch the segments and are recommending to look into something further.

Gabler says there should be two motions. One motion is to swap the trail segments since it is already in the Capital Improvement Plant (CIP). The other motion would be a recommendation to look at extending the segment to Steel Street.

Walick moved, Gabler seconded a motion to move trail segment 10 up to where trail segment number 4 is in 2023. Segment 4 moves back to the year 2026. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Imaretska moved, Walick seconded that we recommend the consideration of extending segment number 10 to Steele St. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

7. Park Board Member Reports

Walick has been to Libbs Lake and people have been good with maintaining social distancing. They are aware that there isn't the same presence. Everyone is being very respectful and aware that it is like a community park.

Evenrud went to the Williston Fitness Center for the first time since March. It is a difficult place to come up with policy that works but they figured it out. Williston Fitness Center Manager, Kristin Pimental and her staff are working really hard to make it work and they seem to be doing a great job. He felt completely comfortable and it seems like everything has been thought of when you walk in there. It is very impressive to see how well it is going.

8. Information Items

Shady Oak Beach

O'Dea reported.

Sunrise Park

O'Dea reported.

Robinwood Park

O'Dea reported.

Evenrud thanked staff for being flexible with the beach and giving people opportunities to do something.

Ingraham commented that at Kinsel Park, the north shore of the lake is still severely under water. He asked if there was something structural that has changed. It seems like it has happened ever since that big storm drain was redone. There are a lot of people that like to walk that little loop and the boardwalk is still under water and most of the area is flooded. Ingraham was curious if there has been any other feedback about this from residents or if it has been looked at. He can understand the high water levels earlier in the year, but he doesn't understand why it is still really high there when the water level is down.

O'Dea replied that park maintenance staff was unable to attend tonight so he will ask staff and get back to Ingraham.

Evenrud thanked Ingraham because he walks there and also wondered about it.

Imaretska thinks the farmers market is going great. The staff is doing a great job and she is happy it is taking place. It feels great to be able to shop and support our local farmers.

Evenrud has been to the last two farmers markets and the numbers seem pretty good. People are taking advantage of it.

O'Dea thanked Imaretska and Evenrud for their comments. O'Dea talked to our farmers market coordinator today and she referenced over a thousand people were at the market on Tuesday. He doesn't remember ever hearing a number that big for a farmers market.

9. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea reported.

10. Adjournment

Walick moved, Imaretska seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline
Recreation Administrative Coordinator