



**Minutes
Minnetonka Park Board
Wednesday, June 2, 2021**

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Park Board Members Present: Elliot Berman, Korey Beyersdorf, James Durbin, David Ingraham, Ben Jacobs, Katie Semersky and Chris Walick. Excused: Chris Gabler.

Staff members in attendance: Darin Ellingson, Kathy Kline, Kelly O'Dea, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka. Information technology staff: Jeff Dulac.

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

3. Reports from Staff

Recreation Director, Kelly O'Dea reported that city council and a few other boards and commissions have or will soon start to meet in person. August 4 is the next scheduled park board meeting and he will notify park board members of the plan for that meeting.

Park and Trail Planner, Carol HejlStone accepted a position with Minneapolis. Assistant Recreation Director, Sara Woeste and O'Dea will take over those duties until that position has been hired. One of the projects that HejlStone was working on was the Parks, Open Space and Trail Systems plan (POST). The POST plan public engagement will begin next week. They are planning on rolling out a survey and engagement at the farmers market. Staff and the consultants will continue that engagement through June and July and then hopefully come back with an update to the park board in August.

4. Approval of Minutes

Ingraham moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of April 7, 2021 as submitted. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

Cindy Eyden, is a member of Friends of Minnetonka Parks. Cindy presented a report called "A View from Nature" that was generated by the group. The interview study included park volunteers, visitors and neighbors of Big Willow, Jidana, Kinsel, Lake Rose, Lone Lake, Meadow, Purgatory and Victoria-Evergreen parks. More than 200 people were interviewed.

Study Purpose and Major Findings:

Purpose: to better understand park issues from the local park perspective and to help them inform the city as they will work this year on an updated Natural Resources Master Plan and a POST plan for the city and our parks.

Findings: Residents love our parks. However, there is a growing concern that the parks' natural characteristics or amenities, especially those that are distinctive and differentiate Minnetonka from other cities, are in significant decline and need attention.

They found there were seven drivers of the decline of the distinctive natural characteristics or amenities of Minnetonka parks.

1. Lack of a unifying vision and plan
2. Overuse
3. Misuse
4. Lack of education, rules and enforcement
5. Neglect and lack of city maintenance of existing park infrastructure
6. Underfunding of natural resources restoration resulting in over-reliance on volunteers
7. Climate change

Recommendations for 2023-2025:

- Vision: the city of Minnetonka manages its parks using a unifying vision for its park system and a plan for each park
- Voice of the community: local emphasis. Each park has its own plan integrated into an overall park system plan
- Value of natural amenities: commensurate weighting of nature-based, more passive recreational activities with more active recreational activities. Budgeting and critical resource alignment
- Nature spaces: Each park and the park system as a whole has plans to restore and protect the park's natural ecology and distinctive features or amenities

Recommendations for 2021-2022:

- Conduct a community-centered, unifying, strategic planning process for each park and the park system as a whole
- Educate neighbors, volunteers and visitors about each park's vision, unique features and plan by developing and using educational policies and "use" signage
- Work with the park board and staff to rewrite descriptions of the parks to include their significant, unique natural features or amenities
- Work with the park board and staff to identify areas of each park that may be vulnerable to the effects of climate change
- Work with the park board and staff to enlist neighbors, volunteers and visitors to volunteer in the parks to restore, preserve, enhance and manage our natural amenities

Eyden invited park board members to take a walk with them to learn more about the parks.

Walick thanked Eyden and said she did a good job giving them a picture of how the public views the parks and what they would like to see moving forward.

Ingraham appreciated their interests with park concerns and also their volunteer effort in the restoration work. There has been an increase in park usage, however, sometimes that comes with overuse. He thinks maintenance is a challenge and that it is a budgeting issue. There is a misperception sometimes about funds that go towards exploring new opportunities and funds for maintenance. They are very different because one comes from an operating budget and that is separate from the capital budget. Ingraham thinks they could look at how they can successfully get more funds for ongoing maintenance. He

believes in a lot of what the Friends of Minnetonka Parks are talking about, however, he thinks they are only representing a portion of our residents perceptions and anticipation for the parks. He wasn't sure how many dog walkers, bikers or people in organized sports were interviewed. The POST plan is looking to be inclusive of all the kinds of expectations our residents would have and he thinks this was a valuable contribution towards that. Ingraham likes the idea of tours, however it creates a challenge when you invite all of the park board members because of the open meeting law.

Eyden forgot about the open meeting law and said she could help arrange a tour individually. This is invaluable, she doesn't know if they can get the same insight without having a tour or spending a little time in each of the parks.

Semersky thanked them for sending the report in advance. She asked how they prioritized what information was called out for each question. Was there a quantitative method that used the most frequent comments?

Eyden responded that they tried to be representative of the information that came in. They couldn't put all of the comments in the report, however, they do have raw data if park board members wanted to look at it. The survey was done in March so users such as tennis players or pickleball players were not interviewed. The Friends of Minnetonka Parks has a passion for these parks and they are trying to look at what the parks need and how to best support the parks in terms of their natural amenities. She doesn't think that the comments were skewed.

Semersky asked if O'Dea has recommendations on next steps.

O'Dea said he would like to read through the report again and connect with other city staff before making any recommendations at this point.

Walick thinks getting all perspectives is very important. He knows the Friends of Minnetonka Parks really care about the parks and their passion comes through in everything they do.

6. Special Matters

There were none.

7. Business Items

A. 2022-2026 Capital Improvement Program

O'Dea gave the report.

Walick asked if the feasibility study for the skate park is funded for 2022.

O'Dea replied that the plan is to fund that project for 2022.

Walick thought it was awesome that it is being funded and we are moving forward with it.

Ingraham asked O'Dea if he can talk about how park maintenance budgeting works for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He sees things that are taking longer to get

maintained and asked if there are things we can do to help support increased maintenance resources if they are appropriate.

O'Dea responded that Ingraham's comments are correct in that, those maintenance type of dollars are in the operational budget and you would not see it in the CIP. Staff is currently starting to work on the 2022 operational budget that gets approved by the city council at the end of the year. Parks and Streets Operations Manager, Darin Ellingson and Public Works Director, Will Manchester will work on park maintenance and Natural Resources Manager, Leslie Yetka will work on natural resources. Each division may or may not have a line item for maintenance, however, recreation has a number of different line items for operations.

Semersky asked what projects were the most debated on the list.

O'Dea answered that they take a close look at the parks investment plan, which, includes parks, playgrounds and tennis courts. Ellingson and the park staff does a good job analyzing the conditions of the parks. Deciding which years to put things in is something that gets debated for a while. Staff meets and discusses this internally across departments before presenting it to the park board.

Walick thought the CIP looked like it had a good agenda and ranking order.

Semersky asked if it is all within budget.

O'Dea replied that it is. Staff consults with the finance director before coming to the park board. If there were additional items, staff would work with the finance director on those.

Jacobs moved, Semersky seconded a motion to accept the Capital Improvement Program as presented. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

8. Park Board Member Reports

Berman reported that he is graduating tomorrow at 10 a.m. from Hopkins High School. His graduation ceremony will be at Mariucci Stadium on the University of Minnesota campus, where he will be attending school next year. He will finish his term on the park board but wanted to thank everyone for having him on the board.

Park board members congratulated Berman.

Walick heard from some community members that there was an inflatable slide left near the swimming area at Libbs Lake. He asked if the city put it in or if it was left by someone. He wondered if was frowned upon if it was left by someone.

O'Dea thought it wasn't a city inflatable. If it was for personal use he thought it was appropriate for it to be pulled out after use.

Ingraham thought it was nice to see the new floating dock at Lone Lake Park. The first sustainability commission meeting will be in July.

Durbin did a walking tour of Big Willow Park about three weeks ago. It is a gem of a park that he never explored to that depth. He went to Purgatory Park and saw brand new signs with dog walking and off-leash instructions. They were nicely made and located in good spots. He thanked Ingraham for the update on the floating dock at Lone Lake Park.

9. Information Items

Ridgedale Commons

O'Dea gave the report.

Eagle to Bryant Lake Master Plan

Woeste gave the report.

Multi-Use Mountain Bike Trail

Woeste gave the report.

Tennis Court Reconstruction

O'Dea gave the report.

Robinwood Park

O'Dea gave the report.

10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

Ingraham asked if there were any changes to the Shady Oak Beach rates this year regarding a discounted student rate that Berman suggested the previous year.

O'Dea responded that staff decided not to make changes this year. Staff is looking into it for future membership rates.

11. Adjournment

Ingraham moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline

Kathy Kline
Recreation Administrative Coordinator