



**Minutes
Minnetonka Park Board
Wednesday, September 1, 2021**

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

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

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

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

3. Reports from Staff

Kelly O'Dea, Recreation Director reported there was an addendum.

4. Approval of Minutes

Jacobs moved, Beyersdorf seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 4, 2021 as submitted. Durbin and Ingraham abstained. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

There were none.

6. Special Matters

Jim Whisler, Treasurer of the Minnetonka History gave a presentation. It included the following information:

- Early Minnetonka history
- Background of the Minnetonka Historical Society
- Agreements with the City of Minnetonka
- The Minnesota Historical Society Heritage Grant
- Collections software conversion
- Facebook usage and updates
- Events they host or are involved with
- 2022 goals

Semersky appreciated the presentation and loved their mission. She thanked them for engaging younger families.

Ingraham thanked them and he was researching history around Big Willow and Minnetonka Mills and of course your information is the most comprehensive and so he really learned a

lot about your organization when I did that. He appreciates their work and all their volunteers.

7. Business Items

A. Opening of Oric Ave. Right-of-Way (ROW).

Darin Ellingson, Street and Park Operations Manager gave the report.

Durbin asked Ellingson to confirm that it is currently a dirt path.

Ellingson said yes.

Durbin asked what the feasibility is and the cost associated with doing minor landscaping improvements.

Ellingson replied that there isn't much space to do improvements. Staff doesn't do any improvements to other footpaths in the city. If volunteers want to make improvements, Minnetonka Public Works has mulch that could be delivered.

Durbin asked if staff is planning on putting up a small sign mentioning it was open.

Ellingson replied that a sign could be put up telling people that it accesses Lake Rose Park.

Ingraham asked how the homeowners at the two private lots on the far west side felt. His understanding was that one of the lots has an agreement with the city. However, he wasn't sure if the property at 15733 Randall Lane absorbs liability if people continue to use that path and something happens in their backyard.

Ellingson responded that maybe in the 1990's there was talk of doing a public path. The property next to the one Ingraham mentioned signed a trail license. It isn't an easement but rather an agreement to allow people to cross their property. Either homeowner could certainly put up a fence to block people off from using that. Since there is no ROW, the city at this time has nothing to prevent them from doing that. It's been used for thirty years across those properties so it is assumed people are ok with it.

Semersky commented that it looks like there are three homes that border the path. She asked if all three homeowners are comfortable with this proposal.

Ellingson answered that they have been talking with the homeowner at 5700 Lake Rose Drive because they are the only ones that are legally tied to the unused ROW. Based on previous emails, the homeowner has been supportive of opening the ROW because it takes the liability away from them.

Walick mentioned that the homeowner emailed them a list of general questions that she wanted addressed. He wanted to respect her wishes and go through them. Walick also wanted to confirm that if someone gets hurt or if a tree falls on her property that she wouldn't be liable. Walick asked if staff is working with the homeowner to come up with some sort of barrier. Walick wondered if the city would be responsible for any future maintenance.

Ellingson answered yes to Walick's first two questions. Maintenance would be more for vegetation and hazard, not active maintenance.

Walick asked if all those components are within the general vicinity of opening back up, that each of them wouldn't need to be addressed in the resolution.

O'Dea replied that staff would work with the city attorney and with the homeowner when we get to the details of the resolution.

Gabler opened public comment.

Betty Ingram, 15801 Randall Lane, Minnetonka appreciated those on Randall Lane being recognized as having an interest in this as well. Staff postponed this item a month to give them an opportunity to provide their feedback.

Kristine O'Reilly, 5700 Lake Rose Drive, Minnetonka is the homeowner of the property that is being discussed. She read through her seven questions that she emailed prior to the meeting. O'Reilly mentioned that she is ok with this public trail as long as the liability is removed. She is concerned with the increased traffic that she has seen in the last two years on the trail. O'Reilly feels as though there are plans to open up that trail publically, advertising it and possibly connecting it to other trails. She is opposed to those things. There is already an increase of people using it that are coming from different areas and thinks it is being used more of a cut-through for some people. She also thinks the parking will get worse with the increased use.

Douglas Brown, 5701 Lake Rose Drive, Minnetonka said one of his concerns is that there are volunteers that are not being supervised fully and taking it on their own to do things they weren't asked to do. He would like to see a little more structure in volunteer programs because that should not happen. One of the things that historically has been important is having neighborhood involvement when something is going on. The only neighborhood involvement that he knows of in the past 43 years was wanting them to put four feet of gravel down for an eight foot path of asphalt. Brown is also concerned that there are trails on the south part of the park that are supposed to be access trails for natural resources. These trails are named on the 2019 trail map and he has never seen natural resources trails named like that before. Brown feels like people are trying to get a connection between various places such as between Lake Rose and Purgatory Creek. He thinks that is a bad idea to publicize because there is no parking and you don't want to draw crowds.

Kay McCarthy, 15608 Randall Lane, Minnetonka has been training her dog to be a service dog for someone for the past three years. McCarthy is very appreciative of the trails. They access the trail just off Randall and walk up the street to the peninsula area. Those trails have been a huge public resource for her as she has been training her dog. She wanted it to be known what a great service that has been to her as she prepared her dog to serve someone.

Tom Egan, 5732 Lake Rose Drive, Minnetonka is the oldest resident of the Lake Rose area. Egan asked if there was any knowledge of Lake Rose not being designated as a park.

Gabler replied no.

Egan requested that immediate residents be informed if there are decisions being made regarding the trails. His example was that he was not really aware that this meeting was being held.

Gabler replied that typically there would be public notification before anything is done with development of trails. That would be a separate issue.

O'Dea added that they would send out notification. There were 56 homes that received notice regarding tonight's meeting.

Ellingson explained the notification differences for trails and footpaths.

Gabler explained that they wouldn't make a decision without public comment. If there was any expansion of the park or trails, that would be a separate meeting.

Ingraham asked staff if it is technically a park or preserve. He asked how many parks or preserves in Minnetonka don't have signage.

Sara Woeste, Assistant Recreation Director said it is designated as a park. Staff is currently looking at designations and there is no plan to get rid of it as it is. The next item on the agenda is regarding the POST plan and that looks at how all of the parks are classified. There are no parks being taken away, but they may change classification.

Egan asked if there is some type of conflict between the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the parks system in Minnetonka. His example was the water quality in Lake Rose or anything that would be done to the shoreline. He wondered if the park board or the DNR makes those decisions.

Leslie Yetka, Natural Resources Manager explained that the DNR manages what is called everything from the ordinary high water level of the water downwards into the lake. Anything upwards such as the shoreline, slopes or upland areas around the shoreline would be in the purview of the city and the park board.

Egan asked if the DNR would be involved with any construction along the park.

Yetka replied that the DNR would only be involved if it's below the ordinary high water mark. That area is shore land so they are not completely involved. The city has a shore land ordinance that protects areas next to a lake, however, it is a park so they wouldn't be aware of any changes to the park itself.

Egan explained that this piece of land was involved with the street car line that went to Excelsior so there is also historical significance to it.

O'Reilly explained that what they are trying to express is that they are not being involved as a neighborhood when things are being instituted within the park and they feel it has been driven by natural resources. An example was that suddenly there were paths or trails behind her house and when she reached out to natural resources they explained that they are not meant for public use. That is not what is happening though, people are being drawn into the neighborhood and using those paths for public use. In the current

POST plan for Lake Rose, it says, "Given the setting and adjacency of the residential properties involvement by the neighborhood in developing a master plan for the park is critical." They feel as though natural resources is driving all these things and the neighbors suddenly have to deal with it and are being skipped. They also noticed in the *Sun Sailor* newspaper that a volunteer was asking the city to name the bee sanctuary as a park. The neighborhood knew nothing about that and it is going to affect them if it happens. Lastly, they just realized within the last month that Lake Rose Community Preserve was added to the Minnetonka Public Works website. That makes them believe that they are going to start advertising how all these trails connect.

O'Reilly continued that their reason to talk about the public trail now is because the use is unknown and it really could affect the neighborhoods if it starts being a huge cut-through to get off Excelsior Blvd. Brown mentioned the trail names and that is something they just found out about after it was done. They don't understand why they aren't involved in it when the POST plan says they are supposed to be and it is critical because it is an unusual setting. She is the only one on ground level next to that trail so it isn't affecting others on Randall Lane as much as it does her. She has people coming across the back and to the side of her property. She was told that there are plans to connect the bee sanctuary to the public trail next to her. She was objecting to that because it's one more way that the neighborhood is going to be ruined.

Gabler asked O'Dea to verify that the resolution will be written by the city attorney and staff.

O'Dea responded that staff would work with the city attorney and the homeowner.

Gabler commented that their job as a park board would be to signify whether or not they approve of opening the right-of-way. Then the city attorney, city council and staff will work with the homeowner.

Durbin asked if there are any formal trails around Lake Rose.

Ellingson replied that there are no formal trails in that area. In the park board report, under the Trail Improvement Plan there is a trail planned on Excelsior Blvd. A lot of comments he hears is that people are using this to cut-through because they don't want to walk on Excelsior Blvd. Hopefully when that trail is built, people will use that.

Durbin asked O'Reilly what her position is on opening the ROW because he is hearing mixed messages.

O'Reilly felt like she didn't have a choice. She preferred that it was not a public trail, however, the liability was the biggest issue to her and that is why she closed it. Her opinion is that she prefers it is not a public trail because then they have lost all control over what is going to happen in the neighborhood.

Durbin asked her to confirm that she is not in favor of opening the ROW.

O'Reilly answered that when she was trying to figure out how this would work for her, she suggested a couple of times that she had other options they could explore but she didn't get a response and she never told anyone what those other suggestions were.

Now she sees what is going to happen and she is not in favor of opening a public ROW in that neighborhood.

Ingraham thinks that the homeowner is in an amazingly strange position. She is responsible for this space that is not in her property and actually extends into her neighbor's driveway. She has been notified by the city that when those trees come down she is responsible to remove them and also liable if a tree falls down and injures somebody. The really strange thing is if the park board doesn't open the ROW, she remains responsible liability-wise. So she either has public access to that ROW and no liability or maintains liability.

Gabler commented that he is hearing that people are still illegally trespassing by going through and it is getting worse. It is really a liability issue because even if somebody is trespassing and gets injured, the homeowner would still be liable. Gabler thinks she shouldn't be penalized for somebody not doing what they are supposed to. He thinks the other concerns with how to keep people off the property is another conversation.

Ruth Peterson, 5645 Hathoway Lane, Minnetonka lives adjacent to the All Saints woodland and is in charge of maintaining it. Peterson obtained a grant from the Watershed District to restore those woods and has been working on that for about four years. Peterson welcomed the people that came through there. During COVID-19, she has seen an increase in people walking the trails and people have thanked her because that was refreshing for them to do during this time. She loves the connectivity that it provides to their neighborhood. From her point of view she feels that is being neighborly. Peterson has lived in the same house for 43 years and her children walked those paths to Gatewood Elementary. At that time it was kind of a scary because the paths were overgrown with buckthorn and other things. She was delighted with the restoration that started there in 2014 because it made it light, airy and safe. Peterson mentioned that a letter was sent out in September of 2017 from the Natural Resources Manager, Jo Colleran to the neighborhood that gave information about the restoration that was happening. This letter was sent out to the Water Tower Park and All Saints parcels along with three other parcels that included the north and south parcels of Lake Rose and the Oric Avenue outlot. Volunteers provided their names and contact information so if anyone had questions, they could contact them.

Heather Holm, 15327 Lakeshore Ave., Minnetonka is one of the primary volunteers for restoration in the neighborhood. She just wanted to comment on a couple of things that have been said by neighbors.

- There are no plans to connect these isolated restoration projects together or attract more people. They view that as a demonstration site.
- She really appreciates the connectivity that this ROW has provided to our community. They have a safe way to walk east and west by staying off of Excelsior Boulevard.
- She and her husband have been working directly with natural resources since 2006 to restore both the north and south parcels at Lake Rose Park. As part of the Friends of Minnetonka Parks group, she sent neighbors a summary of some of the restoration work that was done when the park board toured it.
- They have done a lot to ecologically restore that park. They have a natural parcel of land with no formalized trails other than deer paths. They worked with

Restoration Specialist, Janet VanSloun directly when they wrote the Watershed Restoration Grant in 2008 for the Lake Rose South Parcel. VanSloun guided volunteers to create some of those restoration footpaths so they had access to the restoration site in the park. They are not formal trails but rather something similar to deer paths. After clearing the buckthorn, they stabilized those restoration footpaths. Her and her husband volunteered close to 600 hours last year so they are really dedicated to improving the natural resources in the parks in our community for everyone to enjoy.

- They hope that they can have a resolution with this ROW. They learned that it was private property and they told city staff that they would no longer do any restoration work on the north parcel because they didn't have public access. That really lost a lot of restoration time that they have been putting into that north parcel of the park. They've had invasive species produce seed this year and drop to the ground so they really reset the clock for a lot of the volunteer efforts that they have been putting into the parks.
- They hope going forward that they can have an amicable relationship with their neighbors. She sends yearly detailed reports to natural resources staff on the work conducted. She sends yearly emails to her neighborhood updating them about the volunteer restoration work. From her position she feels like she goes above and beyond keeping her neighbors informed about what they are doing under the direction of natural resources staff.

Gabler asked for the park board's opinion on staff working with the homeowner more so they can come up with wording that not only protects the liability but also protects the homeowner's property rights. Then maybe bring it back and vote on it in October.

Walick thinks that is part of the next step. This begins the process of that and it allows all those mechanisms to be put in place.

O'Dea added that if they are supportive of opening the ROW then staff would work with the city attorney and homeowner on some of the specifics.

Jacobs moved, Ingraham seconded a motion to open the right-of-way, given the homeowners concerns are taken care of and the park board receives feedback after. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

B. POST Plan Community Engagement Summary

Woeste gave the report.

Walick complimented staff on doing a nice job incorporating teen and tween feedback.

Ingraham complimented staff and Damon Farber on the outreach. It was a lot of effort to make sure as many constituencies were reached.

Durbin added that at the park board tour, one of his major concerns was making sure more than a handful of people were reached out to. He thought that was a considerably good outcome for outreach and across demographics.

Beyersdorf appreciated the thoroughness of the survey. Staff really made sure to try and touch so many different groups and it showed in the feedback. People take the survey on a

computer or phone but when you go out in the community that is where you survey the kids. You will see an obvious difference in what people are looking for when you survey the kids. The older generation may be looking for park information but the younger generation may be looking for more recreational activities.

C. Lone Lake Park Pollinator Planting and Public Engagement Project

Yetka gave the report.

Ingraham asked if the pollinator walk area was more like a prairie planting by the playground.

Yetka said yes, she believes that is intended to be a more semi-formal prairie planting.

Ingraham assumed that the pollinator prairie has taller plants and was concerned on the location because the slope to the west of the tennis courts is a very popular sledding area. He asked if people could sled on either the pollinator lawn or pollinator prairie.

Yetka replied that people could sled on a pollinator lawn. Potentially people could sled on the pollinator prairie but it depends on the situation and how much snow there is.

Ingraham asked if there are any monarch plantings as part of this.

Yetka explained that staff tries to include plantings that support specifically monarchs in all of their work. They would include milkweed in the areas they are actively doing restoration.

Durbin asked if an herbicide that kills dandelions is used on the lawn.

Yetka responded that they do and it was applied a few weeks ago. The herbicide they use is called Fiesta, which is an iron chelate that targets broadleaf so it would also kill dandelions.

Durbin was wondering about the herbicide because Yetka mentioned that dandelions could be an early source of food for the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (RPBB).

Yetka replied that it was a new guidance that came out this week. She doesn't anticipate that all of the broadleaf was killed off by the herbicide. New broadleaf flowers will grow and they will make sure not to take out any dandelions that grow.

Walick added that one comment that kept coming up in emails was that option A only had the pollinator lawn. However, option B kind of covers that by having different sections. Another item that emails referred to was the Dutch White Clover. Walick asked if there are other seed cocktails that would be better suited to provide nutrition or support to the RPBB.

Yetka answered that the University of Minnesota Bee Lab and their researchers indicated that other plant species could be used but these plants have data behind them. Research has shown that these plants do well in a turf that is mowed, they flower at different times of the year and they support native pollinators.

Semersky asked Yetka to explain why she recommended option B.

Yetka explained that option B retains turf grass and it has value for cultural reasons. In an effort to collaborate with the Friends of Lone Lake Park and to continue to support the RPBB and other pollinators in the park, they felt the pollinator playground walk was an area that could be used or seen as an extension of habitation restoration that is already occurring. In terms of woodland restoration for the Aspen Grove, the idea is removing invasive species, opening up the canopy and allowing some of the herbaceous plants and ground level flowers to germinate and grow. That is a food source for the RPBB. The prairie area around the pickleball courts has value, but it would be more of an undisturbed habitat. It would remove turf and take away those cultural benefits it provides in that area. That is why they chose those two specific areas.

Ingraham said he has been on tours with the Friends group at various parks and each time restoration comes up as a key item. He is really intrigued with the Aspen Grove pollinator component but it sounds like it could be a fairly significant restoration project and that it could tie up resources and dollars that might go into other parks. He wanted to confirm that if that were undertaken, that the Friends group understands that there might not be as fast reaction to restoration in other parks due to diverting resources, time and dollars into the Aspen Grove.

Yetka answered that if we are putting resources and funds into this area; that means we are not likely to be able to put quite as many resources in other areas.

Durbin understands that because there is a finite budget and there are multiple needs. His concern is having an approach where the first people that come with a restoration project gets approved. Then the park board never has the opportunity to see what other restoration efforts are out there to weigh the pros and cons. Durbin suggested a strategic plan or a competitive grant if there are multiple groups looking for funds. Otherwise, we are going to run out of funds before they even see what restoration efforts are needed at other parks. If they don't have the visibility of other proposals, they may recommend something to the city council that they may regret later.

Gabler opened the meeting for public comment.

Linda Russell, 5423 Maple Ridge Court, Minnetonka has been involved with the Friends of Lone Lake Park for about three years. She explained that the reason why this project is first is because it is a continuation of mitigation of the construction of the mountain bike trail. That project caused major disruption in the habitat that this endangered bee is using.

Russell gave a presentation on behalf of the Friends of Lone Lake Park. The presentation was regarding the pollinator planting and public engagement project and included the following information:

- Background
- Rusty Patched Bumble Bee
- Pollinator Lawn at Lone Lake Park
- "Bee lawns" and the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee
- Other pollinator plantings in Lone Lake Park
- Friends of Lone Lake Park Proposal
- Project elements
- Options to proceed

- Staff recommendation
- Park board action

Tom Stockert, 5524 Dominick Drive, Minnetonka lives right between Shady Oak Park and Lone Lake Park. He wanted to focus on budget and shifting funds. A few weeks ago there was a seven figure change to Ridgedale Park at the city commission meeting using park dedication funds. The justification was that there is a lot of housing in Ridgedale and money should go to the park. There is a lot of housing going in at Opus and there are probably some park dedication funds coming from Opus. The people at Opus live in a parking lot and really deserve having a park near them. If there is trouble shifting funds he thinks the city could do a little bit with park dedication funds when you get a million three for Ridgedale. His main concern when the bike trail went in was the birds nesting. This is the first season he hasn't seen a Scarlet Tanager in his yard. He always suspected they were probably nesting in Lone Lake Park and visiting his yard. With that, he thinks option C is the best habitat for that but is supporting option B in a collaborative nature with the city.

John Mirocha, Maple Ridge Court, Minnetonka is involved with the Friends of Lone Lake Park, but is also the president of the Friends of Minnetonka Parks group. The Friends group supports this project 100 percent. Those of you that have been on park walks with them realize there are significant issues beyond budgeting, staffing and over resources in many of the other parks. There will be other projects coming to the park board and this one is kind of the pilot. It is really important to them because their goal is to have a collaborative partnership relationship with the city and the park board. They want to join forces to increase the resources as a nonprofit organization. They will be able to raise money and they want to help the city because they really believe that these natural amenities attract people to our community.

Heather Holm has co-authored/authored four grants on behalf of the natural resources department, totaling over \$100,000 to do restoration work; in addition to spending a lot of her spare time volunteering for the parks. She is tapped out so she thinks we need to think of this model a little differently. The expectation that the residents or volunteers alone can look after these spaces won't work. She challenges them to think about how they can figure out this funding discrepancy. For example, the pickleball players got a wonderful eight court pickleball court and they are not responsible for maintaining it. The expectation is that the Friends groups have to look after and maintain the things they are asking for you to consider as an amenity in a park.

Holm explained that she is professionally a pollinator conservationist and is considered a regional expert on native bee biology, their natural history and in addition to the specific plant associations. She has authored three award winning books on the subject that are peer reviewed and cover the subject of native bee habitat and specific plant associations with native bees. She leads bumble bee surveys on behalf of the University of Minnesota Extension and she has logged thousands of hours in the field observing and documenting pollinator associations with plants. The proposed plan is based upon the RPBB assessment recommendations put forth by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Xerces Society. This plan will provide all of the habitat and life cycle requirements for the RPBB. The Aspen Woods would provide nesting sites, overwintering sites for the queens, early spring forage plants which are critical. The shortgrass prairie or meadow would provide summer plants that the bee would utilize and all of the sites proposed would be relatively undisturbed unlike a mowed bee lawn. All of the things that were proposed would support a diversity of other native bee species that call Minnesota home. There are about 460 species of native bees in

Minnesota and close to 30 percent of those are pollen specialists. The specialists or native bees completely rely on native plants. A bee lawn doesn't really provide the food, the nesting sites or the critical overwintering habitat that RPBB queens require. It also doesn't provide a diversity of flowering plants that the annual colony needs because it is active between May until the end of September. The bee lawn has low plant diversity, usually about two or three species, which two are typically non-native. The bee lawn primarily attracts non-native bees in particular the European Honey Bee. That is a problem because the European Honey Bees are an introduced species and are known to compete for food with native bee populations. The Fish and Wildlife Service actually recommends that no honey bee hives are placed within two miles of known RPBB populations. The concern regarding bee lawns is that the Dutch White Clover is one of the highest recruited flowering plants by honey bees. Planting a bee lawn would draw in honey bees from surrounding areas and there is concern that direct resource competition would occur. There are really no scientific studies that demonstrate that a bee lawn supports the RPBB. There are handfuls of observations of the bee utilizing Dutch White Clover and they know that diverse native habitat is much better and that is what the federal organizations overseeing the conservation of native pollinators recommend. The scientific community including the RPBB recovery team scientists and others are very concerned that other communities will follow our lead if we put in a bee lawn. They do not want a bee lawn setting that precedent. This is about doing the right thing. She feels there is a city obligation to make sure that the right habitat is put in for this federally endangered species and to set an example for other communities.

Beyersdorf asked why the pollinator lawn is in option B if it is not useful to the bees.

Yetka replied that she doesn't know if it is accepted science that the pollinator lawn won't provide any benefit. The word habitat implies food, nesting material or a site that an undisturbed area where bees can nest. We are not saying that the pollinator lawn is providing equal habitat to a natural area but there is a lot of undisturbed habitat in the park. The purpose of the pollinator lawn is maintaining the cultural benefits of turf, along with providing some food for bees and native bees. We have observations of RPBB feeding in turf grass or in a lawn area even with native plants flowering nearby. It's about the multiple benefits we are trying to maintain in the park while also doing something better for the RPBB.

Durbin noted that there is a little difference of professional opinion in the scientific community and he understands and respects that. The city entered a legal agreement with the Center for Biological Diversity to put in a bee lawn. Now it sounds like that potentially isn't a good idea. Durbin said that legal agreements should be cut and dry and thinks money shouldn't be spent if we are not sure if things are correct, however, there is a legal agreement that says it needs to get done and there is a timetable for it. In his opinion, option A should be done because there is a legal agreement. Now it seems like add-ons are being made based on consultations with interest groups. He's not sure what other restoration priorities there are in the city that might have to be postponed due to adding on. He believes that is where the park board needs visibility of a masterplan. There were comments made saying there would be more and he thinks it would be nice if they had a formal process for accepting park project proposal applications. He has concerns with spending city resources on a legal agreement that had a lot of public input.

Holm said the Friends of Lone Lake Park were not involved in any of the settlement terms regarding the pollinator lawn. The agreement has two options, pollinator lawn or pollinator meadow. The pollinator meadow would be 100 percent better for this endangered species

and that is what they would like. Holm recommended putting in a one acre pollinator meadow and that would fulfill the legal settlement.

Durbin commented that Holm mentioned earlier that she was tapped out in volunteering. Durbin asked if enough money was being spent on restoration. He hears what she is saying and agrees with her in the sense that maybe we are taking on more than we can financially handle. He appreciates community volunteering, however, if volunteers stopped helping then that project would fail and naturally go away.

Holm added that she thinks the overall allocation of funding should be considered when thinking about the POST plan. There is a lot of funding for new amenities but what is being done on the maintenance side of things. Figuring out how to get more balanced funding is a challenge moving forward.

Yetka wanted to clarify one thing regarding the legal agreement. The discussions staff had with the Center for Biological Diversity regarding the agreement is that a pollinator lawn or a pollinator meadow were equally acceptable. Her understanding was the Friends of Lone Lake Park did review that settlement agreement but she isn't sure where it went beyond that. In terms of allocation of resources, the natural resources masterplan will hopefully address some of that. Staff is going to put elements of it out for public feedback and then it will come to the park board and city council at their joint meeting in November. It will help in determining priority restoration areas. It may not necessarily solve the problem of which project should be funded because we don't necessarily know what projects may be coming before us. You will be seeing more on prioritization related to restoration and restoration dollars and resources.

Jacobs mentioned that it is hard to know what other projects are coming forward. He values the collaboration that has been done with this project. Jacobs thinks that maybe we could do better but option B is really good. He feels as though option B is the better option for our community long-term and for what he envisions Minnetonka to be.

Walick added that they did the mountain bike trails knowing that there would be some building of various things that may have gotten taken away by the trail. We could just put in a bee lawn but if that is not going to work than why not do something a little bit better. The RPBB is important and something needs to be done.

Jacobs is confident that the Friends of Minnetonka Parks will be volunteering there. He thinks there is value in talking about how they can best help facilitate that in the long-term.

Durbin commented that staff won't bring up a project if there isn't funding available. He thinks it is best for staff to step back and evaluate multiple projects and then decide on the funding rather than on a first-come, first-serve basis. This is a great project but we don't know what the next great project is because the funds will be allocated and gone after we vote on it. If we approve every great project then we are going to miss the opportunity on other projects.

Gabler asked if there is a priority list of projects coming in the next couple of months.

Yetka explained that the hope for tonight is that the park board provides a recommendation to move forward on one of these options. Coming before you in the future will be the natural resources masterplan. That will provide more clarity in terms of prioritizing parks and

restoration areas. That could help you make decisions better about where we should be allocating resources when we get project proposals like this.

Gabler added that they are an advisory board and they don't control the budget. Tonight staff is looking for a motion on whether they approve option A, B or C.

Yetka replied that projects similar to this typically don't go to council for formal approval. They can basically reside at the park board.

O'Dea added that staff is looking for feedback on options A, B and C. Staff's recommendation is option B.

Gabler asked if funding is available for C.

O'Dea and Yetka answered that funding is available for option C.

Ingraham agrees with Durbin's perspective on trying to get a broader view. He is concerned not only about the projects we haven't heard about yet, but also the projects that are going on that will get slowed down and deprioritized. He likes option C, but another perspective is to do option A which fulfills the legal agreement. It doesn't preclude any future plans so they could learn more about options B and C. Option A would allow turf and there really isn't a huge reconstruction if later on you want to put in a prairie or pollinator walk.

Durbin agrees with Ingraham because it doesn't preclude doing things in the future. He has a concern with trees being removed in Lone Lake Park. He has a long history of knowing about projects that remove trees in Minnetonka. When five trees are taken down, it isn't a big deal but when there are two dozen or more it is significant. He isn't comfortable taking down 25-60 trees without really understanding the depth of knowledge, especially if this doesn't go to council. When talking about 60 trees being removed, he predicts that city council will get involved. He needs more information before he could support that. Are there any alternatives besides taking out that many trees at Lone Lake Park?

Yetka explained that they were presented with a concept plan and our restoration specialist did a cursory review. That was her estimation and staff has not done a survey. Staff would need to get more clarity on which trees are being removed and where in the area. The general proposal was to open up some of that canopy, remove the buckthorn and restore some of that understory vegetation. Doing that can support and provide not only nesting habitat but the spring floral resources that the bee needs. In order to do that we would need to open up some of that canopy and underground area. She doesn't know if it is 25 or 60 but there would be trees that would require to be removed.

Durbin leans towards option A for that point that he feels they shouldn't be voting on something that they don't even know what they are voting on. Being in the position of taking down 10, 20 or even 60 trees is significant to ask them without having an inventory.

Holm added that Public Works Director, Will Manchester said they couldn't give up turf grass and they wanted to put in habitat for the RPBB so they looked at the fragment behind the basketball court. It is a site that has been highly disturbed so the trees being discussed are pioneer or early successional trees. Mainly they are boxelder in addition to some invasive trees. This is actually good and best management practices ecologically to thin out some of the native boxelders. The intent is to get more light into the understory that is going to

increase floral diversity and that is what the RPBB needs. It's not 60 trees but probably 18 boxelders and seven invasive trees. They would not be advocating to take out oak trees or really high valued trees. This plan is to take out really low value trees and invasive trees.

Durbin recommends a tree inventory of what we are going to take out before they vote on removing trees. Once you take down a tree, you can't put it back up so he thinks they are a little bit ahead of themselves.

Beyersdorf is conflicted on the information that they were provided tonight. She feels as though Holm's recommendation is to not do a pollinator lawn which is in the proposals for options A and B. If the legal terms say that a pollinator meadow is acceptable than why wouldn't they go with that option unless it costs more? If a meadow is a smarter or better choice for the RPBB than why aren't they taking that more into consideration? She feels like there needs to be maybe another option that removes the pollinator lawn and focuses just on the pollinator meadow.

Walick said his understanding was that the pollinator lawn was advocated by the Center for Biological Diversity. It was between the pollinator meadow and the pollinator lawn and staff went with the pollinator lawn because they said both would be effective. Based on the needs and usage of the park, it seems like option C may be the best option for the RPBB but it may not meet the overall needs of the park. Walick thinks people wouldn't be happy with Option A so why not spend a little more money on option B and be successful with it.

Beyersdorf asked if they would be meeting the terms of the legal agreement if a pollinator meadow replaced the pollinator lawn in option B.

Yetka responded that if we had an acre of pollinator meadow, they would be meeting the terms of the agreement. She mentioned that one of the purposes of the pollinator lawn is to retain the cultural benefits of turf. There is not a lot of turf in this park; it is primarily native and woodland. It is about providing some forage but also maintaining the turf for human use. A pollinator meadow does not allow that.

Ellingson added option B is trying to find a balance between providing the habitat and usage to other park users. People use the hill for exercise, sledding, sunbathing, and picnicking. The pollinator lawn allows people to use the space and it provides the habitat for the RPBB.

Beyersdorf asked if there was different way to seed it.

Yetka said it would have to be turf grass that is seeded into species, which, we have been told by the University of Minnesota Bee Lab that a bee lawn will not cause ecological harm. There are certainly differences of opinion in the scientific community but the bee lawn is about taking turf and keeping it as turf. A meadow is about taking out the turf grass and planting prairie type of plants. An example, is if you put in a pollinator lawn in your front yard, you would still mow it and kids or dogs are able to still play on it. The other option would be removing the turf grass and planting it into a prairie, which, you would not be able to mow or play on it.

Ingraham mentioned that there is a proposed picnic facility that is going in at the bottom of the hill. That is an outstanding project from when the pickleball courts were built because they removed a picnic shelter there. When the shelter goes in, what is going to be more conducive for local use next to a picnic facility?

Durbin replied that is true but they don't have to approve the picnic shelter. There is already a picnic shelter by the lake.

Ingraham commented that he thinks we are required or are expected to be putting in another picnic facility to replace the one they took out when they built the pickleball courts.

Durbin asked staff if they have to make a decision on this tonight. He would like to get more information or think about other options. He personally is not comfortable with the data that he has right now to make an informed decision.

Yetka said there is no requirement that you have to make a decision tonight and you can recommend getting more information presented to you. Staff does have their requirement to proceed with their current course of action which is continuing to install the bee lawn. We have indicated to the Center for Biological Diversity that is what we will do and they have approved that. That certainly wouldn't preclude anything else from happening down the road. As she mentioned the natural resource master plan could potentially provide some clarity on some of your discussions relating to prioritizing where resources are going and how we handle projects that come in from groups.

Walick trusts the experts to recommend option B. Staff worked with the Friends of Minnetonka group and they recommended option B and he feels comfortable with that.

Jacobs added that Hannibal Hayes, the city forester would be involved with any tree removal and he really values and trusts his opinion as well. Jacobs agrees with Walick that he is comfortable with staff looking at everything and taking any necessary precautions.

O'Dea asked Yetka if there is any time sensitive pieces to this.

Yetka replied that the current course of action which is to install the bee lawn is time sensitive. It is supposed to be seeded in September because that is the ideal time to do it. If the board doesn't make a motion or recommendation to move forward with option B, they would still continue with the bee lawn.

Jacobs asked if staff proceeds with the pollinator lawn and then the park board later voted on option B if staff would have to redo that work.

Yetka answered no. The area that is bee lawn overlaps with for instance the pollinator playground. That turf is going to be killed off because that is part of the restoration.

Jacobs asked if they could vote for option A to be compliant but still do option B without having extra work or spend extra money to redo everything.

Yetka answered that there is extra work because a contractor has to be hired to take out the turf and plant the meadow vegetation to the specifications that staff asks for.

Durbin moved, Ingraham seconded a motion to move forward with option A, with expectation to get more information requested and receive additional options. Durbin, Ingraham and Semersky voted "yes". Beyersdorf, Gabler, Jacobs and Walick voted "no". Motion denied.

Gabler said his inclination is to go with what city staff has recommended. He thinks it has been thought out and it is something that was agreed upon by a couple of parties. There is good, better and best and this would be in the better realm in his opinion.

Semersky shares the tree concern. That it is a lot of trees to take out and she doesn't know how the community is going to take that. If she votes to support B and the community says they don't support taking down all those trees, does it go back to the drawing board?

Ingraham asked if we can make the motion contingent upon a review of the tree plan.

Semersky thought in option B it mentioned the community approving the tree plan.

Yetka replied that the requirement is to host a community meeting to describe the restoration.

Semersky asked if the community's response was negative if they would take a step back or move forward.

Walick appreciates the city because staff will consider things if people get upset. He thinks the city is run by good people who want to do good things and they will listen. Based on what he heard is that the trees will be cut down strategically.

Ingraham said he went out there and stood on the basketball court and looked. As Holm indicated, it needs to be cleaned out. There are a lot of trees there that you don't know exist. There are four really great Aspen trees in there but you have to look really hard to find them. It is a great place to have the canopy open up. He is assuming the staff would do a good job opening the canopy in a responsible way.

Durbin said he just wanted to be more informed before he voted.

Walick moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to move forward with option B. Beyersdorf, Gabler, Ingraham, Jacobs and Walick voted "yes". Durbin abstained. Semersky voted "no". Motion carried.

8. Park Board Member Reports

Durbin wanted to address the maintenance at the parks. He feels like parks are not being maintained other than the really finished Big Willow playing fields and Minnetonka Mills Park by the Burwell House. He was at Meadow Park yesterday looking for a place to kick the soccer ball around. He found grass that is not really maintained and an outdoor ice rink with weeds and plants taller than him pushing into the barrier. Walking into Meadow Park looks really nice but if you walk past the tennis courts and turn right it doesn't look very good. Spring Hill Park is not maintained and the lawn isn't mowed to any level that you could kick a soccer ball around. When the parks are mowed, there is a lot of grass clippings because it isn't mowed often and it doesn't get picked up. Fundamentally, he thinks we have this idea that our parks are wonderful but what we are seeing is this crunch where volunteers are needed and we can't do anything without them. He thinks fundamentally the city needs to really evaluate these parks and trails. They should look into whether or not they are maintaining them to the level that they are supposed to. If you go on any of the running/bike

trails, there are areas where everybody knows to stay away from after it rains. What are we doing to mitigate that? Every time he goes to a park in Minnetonka this is what he is seeing. He does not see that when he visits parks in neighboring cities. Durbin feels as though our parks are not being maintained and that we aren't spending enough money and resources to maintain them.

Ingraham complimented the maintenance group because there has been a lot of grading of the limestone paths in the parks. He thinks that has been really well done and is a major improvement. He thinks the Excelsior trail is great and it is going to be really great when it is completely done. It is open now and he sees a lot of neighbors using it. He shares Durbin's concern about the level of maintenance in some of the parks, particularly the natural restoration areas and the amount of resources we had to devote to that.

Ingraham mentioned that the sustainability committee has had a couple of meetings. The principle responsibility so far is for the members to represent the city's sustainability efforts at community events like the farmers market. They also inputted on the tree ordinance which was a pretty extensive series of documents to review and comment on. He has done a lot of Friends' tours lately and respects the passion they have for restoration and improving our parks. He thinks it is worthy but he doesn't know what the right forum is. He kind of fears as the Friends groups get more engaged that it is easy for some residents to get confused about a volunteer representing the city vs the city. There are a lot of people in Lake Rose neighborhood who believe the volunteers that are working on restoration are actually natural resources employees or under the direction of natural resources. He thinks that is something that needs to be really looked at hard. The Friends groups have a lot of ambitious ideas around various parks and to the extent they volunteer. That is something we want but without a lot of real sanctioning it is hard to talk to residents about paths that have gone in behind their houses and things like that. That is just something we need to watch for.

9. Information Items

Fall Registration Update

Woeste gave the report.

Interpretive Signage in Lone Lake Park

Yetka gave the report.

Lake Holiday/Wing Lake/Lake Rose Study

Yetka gave the report.

10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

11. Adjournment

Ingraham moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:35 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline

Kathy Kline
Recreation Administrative Coordinator