



**Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the
Minnetonka Park Board and City Council
Wednesday, November 3, 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. Excused: Elliot Berman.

Council Members Present: Mayor Brad Wiersum, Deb Calvert, Kissy Coakley, Brian Kirk, Rebecca Schack, Bradley Schaeppi, Excused: Susan Carter.

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

Gabler called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

O'Dea announced there was an addendum and that audio recording was taking place.

3. Business Items

A. Parks, Open Space and Trails (POST) Plan Update

Assistant Recreation Director, Sara Woeste gave the staff report.

Principal, Jeff McMenimen and Landscape Architect, Rachel Blaseg from Damon Farber Landscape Architects gave a presentation that included the following:

1. Needs assessment – key takeaways
 - A. Community engagement summary
 - Key takeaways
 - B. Trends
 - C. System components and condition
 - Park audit and NRPA key takeaways
2. Draft mission and guiding principles

McMenimen asked for any questions regarding the community engagement summary and there were none. They continued to talk about trends and he asked for questions.

Calvert commented about the trend moving away from organized team sports. She questioned if COVID-19 exacerbated that or if it was a trend that has been happening longer than that.

McMenimen responded that it is a longer trend than COVID-19.

Wiersum asked if there was any transition to different sports such as from baseball to soccer or if it was a general decline. He was curious if it was certain sports declining whereas others are staying or growing.

McMenimen replied that you will see as our communities diversify, we are becoming more culturally and ethnically/racially diverse; the programs and facilities are changing as well. There are other sports that are gaining in popularity like soccer. Lacrosse is the fastest growing sport in high school across America right now.

Wiersum added that he was at the Al-Amaan Center a few years ago and a gentleman made a point of talking to him about cricket.

Blaseg commented that one of the things they heard was people wanting more multi-use fields. They specifically heard that at the Al-Amaan Center.

McMenimen talked about changing demographics.

Blaseg talked about the park audits and the NRPA metrics audit that was conducted.

Wiersum asked how peer communities was defined.

McMenimen responded that those peer communities are defined through the NRPA metrics audit. They are comparing Minnetonka to communities across America that are similar in population, household income and demographics.

Wiersum mentioned that Minnetonka has 53 parks and 24 acres per thousand residents. Minnetonka's population is around 53,000 so that means there is a park for every 1,000 residents. He asked how that compares with peer communities in terms of number of parks per thousand.

McMenimen responded that he would have to search the NRPA metrics results for an answer. However, he thinks Minnetonka has a fair share of parks.

Blaseg added that according to the national standards it is quite a bit higher, however, Minnetonka is similar to neighboring communities such as Eden Prairie and Chanhassen.

Wiersum asked if that is acreage or actual numbers of parks.

Blaseg responded acreage.

Wiersum thinks about the comparison to Eden Prairie and Chanhassen. Minnetonka is a fully developed community, whereas, both of those communities have a lot of open space so he feels like the dynamics change a little bit.

McMenimen said that the number of parks is important and their distribution across community is important. A community wants to try and provide a park within a quarter of a mile to every home in the community.

Blaseg added that there is a high amount of undeveloped land within those parklands too.

McMenimen went through the draft mission statement and guiding principles. He explained that a lot of the guiding principles were supported by all of the input they received from the community in the early part of this planning process. They are working through the system plan recommendations now and they will provide more support on how you actually achieve those guiding principles.

Gabler looked at the emerging trends and he is trying to figure out how to define something as a trend or a fad. He asked how you maintain flexibility if you put resources into something in a park that people may find interesting for only a year such as ninja warrior courses.

McMenimen answered that trends and fads are similar but trends probably last longer than a fad. The ninja warrior park was something that came out of the community input survey and he isn't sure if it is a trend or not.

Blaseg said ninja warrior parks have been wildly successful in neighboring communities but she isn't sure how long that is going to last. Keep in mind flexibility as you design future spaces. As things age, different things come in. Think about emerging trends and how you might be able to use existing areas as they need to be repurposed.

McMenimen added that more multi-use or multi-functional facilities are a trend. He advised them to dial into the community for input on what their desires are. Nationally and locally, they have heard the desire for climbing walls, ninja parks and skateboard parks.

Schaeppi was trying to understand how the choices were presented to the community, such as anticipating true passive additional use of a park. He gave an example of Terrace Oaks Park in Burnsville, Minnesota. A few community members brought him there and it was previously a heavily forested area with a lot of buckthorn. The buckthorn was removed and it is now used differently. He sees Minnetonka also having these large open areas and as we think of these ideas, he wanted to know how the community engagement worked with giving options as a more improved ecological passive use in a park.

McMenimen replied that it was kind of a system wide set of input and recommendations. One of the things you will see in the systems plan recommendation is to prepare a master plan for individual parks in the future whether they are new parks or if you're proposing to improve facilities in an existing park or an open space. For instance, this does not provide a master plan for each of the 53 parks and open spaces in the community. Each park is very different so that is something that should be done at that time so it can be more location specific.

Woeste asked Schaeppi to clarify if he is asking if all of the natural areas will be assessed and how they will be used in the future.

Schaeppi replied that they will be making a lot of decisions based upon this very comprehensive data of what the community is telling us. They have a separate track of really looking at our natural resources parks and his observation is that some of what we are anticipating in our parks may not be in here. His concern is as it relates to programming and active versus passive recreation. For instance, the consultant's data mentioned about 69 percent support for natural areas for passive recreation and about 42 percent for parks with recreational amenities. He just wanted to make sure if they are

making decisions based upon the results of community engagement that it properly reflects what they are doing in a separate process.

Woeste commented that it is a master plan so any decisions going forward would go through the process. The consultants are going to tell staff that this is what they've heard from your whole system and now staff can say here are our priorities. Staff heard that people wanted a skate park and that natural areas and open spaces are very important to the public. However, staff isn't going to put in a skate park in our natural areas. Staff also heard that we need to maybe reprioritize their active areas. For example, maybe look at an existing ice rink and refocus something there.. We are going to go through the process and evaluate the spaces that we are looking at. The key thing is multi-use space and repurposing and reimagining areas that are already active spaces; not going into our natural areas that we know are high quality and an importance to our community.

Schack stated that surveys tend to get traction with certain folks and they may not reflect a majority of the community, however, they are the ones that participate. There is a page on diversity and inclusion but what we are hearing in the survey isn't going to hit on what those needs are. As this is being worked on, space should be left for what we don't know. For instance, council has been hearing from a small group of folks that would really like an accessible playground structure for kids with differing abilities. That is never going to get traction like a group such as MORC that has hundreds of people supporting it. She is conscience of keeping in mind to honor this whole page that we have as our guiding principles. She doesn't want people to get so much tunnel vision on the majority that we don't honor what people who don't have as strong of a voice need to meet their needs. Also, maybe there are people that aren't even part of the community yet but we are looking to attract them.

Ingraham said having sat through the advisory committee meetings, it was really important that the concepts that were offered by the community are ideas. However, he doesn't believe most of them are ever going to be actionable. He wouldn't want people getting excited about all of these amenities and then wonder where all the money is going to come from. He thinks they have to pick and choose which ones are going to do the most good and hopefully manage people's expectations on both sides.

McMenimen added that they also understood that they don't get the full spectrum of people in your community participating in a survey. Email blasts were sent out but they also went out into the community to get younger people's perspectives. They went to Shady Oak Beach and conducted a pop-up event and got input that they never would get in a survey. They have to remember that demographic is what they are planning for in a long range plan. It is really important to reach out and engage with as many people as possible. Also, you have to continually engage as long as you are stewarding this plan throughout the future. You will see the importance of engaging with everybody in the community whenever you are doing a new park master plan.

Wiersum commented that there is a lot of art involved in designing parks and amenities. If we just use a survey and we need to have a threshold to do something, then we wouldn't do a lot of things. Even if we don't meet a threshold, there are people who will really advocate for it. He thinks there is the art in terms of assessing what the ideas are and then what the critical mass necessary is for the city to invest without overinvesting in things. Wiersum also mentioned that once you do something and build infrastructure, it is really hard to get rid of it because there will be advocates.

Calvert thinks Shack's comment is really on point. One thing she thought was interesting was the page about natural habitat and what people were or weren't concerned with. What struck her is that people have ideas about what is going on in the city and they might not know the actual condition or the actual importance of something; it's just a feeling they have. She thinks it is really important to sort of pick through the actual scientific data and not just people's perceptions of what they should be concerned about but also taking their concerns into consideration. Calvert wondered what some of the comments were about cultural differences or cultural practices prohibiting people from interacting in our parks. Generally this is filtered into a sort of a generalized statement but is there a way for them to come up with specific ways to address the concerns.

Blaseg replied that one example is being able to promote existing programming and parks to the entire community because some people don't know that they exist. Another example is areas for community gatherings. At the Al-Amaan Center, they heard that they will go to neighboring communities to have larger group gatherings just because it is more supported at other parks than it is within Minnetonka.

McMenimen added that the people at Al-Amaan said it would be great if Minnetonka had a park where they could have a couple of hundred people gather for an event or community gathering. Other suggestions they heard were more picnic shelters, more seating areas and actual cooking facilities like a kitchen in a park facility.

Coakley was glad that this was being discussed tonight because these are some of the things she has been talking about since being on the council, such as creating programming that isn't typically offered in Minnetonka. She has lived here for a long time and she still struggles with trying to find programming. When she thinks about clay pot making or instrumental lessons she thinks of community centers. Those are at a community level which are not high priced fees that some BIPOC folks can't afford. She is glad we are talking about programming and services that we could provide in our city. It is really important especially when discussing the times we are in and how our city is becoming more diverse. We have to constantly keep that on our mind because everybody can't afford all the different programs that we have here because of the fees.

Kirk said at his day job he just got done spending a fair amount of time trying to find out why the BIPOC community is not accessing outdoor recreational activities. Two resources that they came across were the Three Rivers Park District and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Department. Both have done extensive studies on why outdoor recreation is difficult to access for people of color. It would be nice to try and get some specific resources if we want to dig into this reason of why and what they can do to make changes in how we program. This would include what is offered, how it is scheduled and what it costs.

Kirk wanted to comment on Schaeppi's previous remark regarding passive versus active recreation. He thinks about 10-15 years ago, people saw the environmental impacts differently in our city. Now we have a lot more focus thanks to the Friends of Minnetonka Parks and the Sustainability Commission. He thinks there are some examples across the city where we need to figure out the definition of passive vs active and clearly map it out so that our community knows. He gave an example of Big Willow being a passive park and another example about Purgatory Park and whether a certain area should have natural resources or if it is a dog run area. His point was that they have to make a

decision on what areas are and call it out so people know what it is and aren't arguing about it. He thinks that clarity and verbal word transparency are important as we move forward.

Durbin added that he has noticed since being on the park board that everybody wants to use the parks and there is a higher demand. There are a lot of people that want to use them for active recreation and there is just as strong input for natural resources and passive use. The balance is quite hard and he thinks what Kirk just said is a very fascinating problem and he wonders how they can try to manage that. Also, regarding equity and the people who don't contact the city or don't come to park board meetings, they may never consider things because it was never brought up. It's really hard to know what you don't know. There is a lot that everybody wants and it's quite challenging to figure out what we should do.

Gabler asked if we have a working definition of diversity, equity and inclusion because he thinks it means different things to different people. He's struggled with that because he doesn't know what it means sometimes.

Coakley replied to Gabler that the DEI task force is working on that right now because that is one of the things that they also struggle with.

Calvert thought back to comments she has received over the last several months about the need for accessibility at parks. She thinks about friends that are differently abled and she also thinks about the people that have written in. Some people have mentioned that they don't access their neighborhood parks because of off-leashed dogs. They've been bitten or their dog that was on a leash was attacked. In regards to Kirk's comment about deciding what we are doing, she thinks it is really important and they should take those comments really seriously. She thinks that we have to be cognizant and that it is almost an empathy thing. You need to be able to imagine what people need and not necessarily hear from them sometimes. We know there are people who are differently abled in our community, we know there are differently abled children that need to be able to get on a swing and we know there are people that would like to take their dog somewhere safe. She thinks we do have to be courageous and start making some really difficult decisions about how we are using some of our parks. We also need to realize that even if we turn a park into a dog park that it doesn't mean that it is no longer an actual natural resource and some biodiversity can't be maintained there. She totally agrees with needing a better definition about what is active and what is passive. She thinks we saw that in the battle over the mountain bike trail at Lone Lake Park. We have several large parks that are considered preserves and we should make sure we honor and better define what a preserve is and note what we are preserving and how. If we have to change what we are doing or change what the park is, we can make those decisions. However, she thinks definitions are really important so we know what we are dealing with.

B. Natural Resources Master Plan Update

Leslie Yetka, Natural Resources Manager gave the report.

Fred Rozumaski, Landscape Architect from Barr Engineering gave a presentation on the following:

- Background
- Existing conditions

- Top five 'Grand Challenges' for managing natural resources in Minnetonka
 - Issues
 - Strategies
- Feedback received to date
- Next Steps

Yetka asked for questions.

Wiersum appreciated the compliments on our tree sale made by the consultant. He thinks our tree sale is a great program, however, he would like it to be bigger. He is really proud of the fact that we have around 58 percent tree coverage. He used to own a cabin in Bayfield, WI and every year at their annual meeting they got free seedlings of native plants. He has a Tamarack tree that was a foot long seedling and is now 20 feet tall. As he thinks about wanting us to plant more trees, if the city had a program of very low cost or free seedlings maybe we could make those available. He has this vision that if we did that, maybe we could keep track of exactly how many trees are cut down in Minnetonka every year and make sure that we plant that many every year. We don't have to retain every tree to retain our 58 percent cover, but at the same time he thinks we would be breaking even in terms of tree removal and tree additions. He's just not sure the seedlings would do well in this area.

Rozumaski said he thinks that is a great idea. Especially with equity issues, seedlings are much less expensive. One thing to consider is they would have to be protected because deer, rabbits and mice are going to chew on them. The ones you really want are the ones they love to eat.

Calvert noted that her husband is a retired wildland firefighter and did control burns a lot, which were mentioned in the packet. Some of the invasive species in the wetlands are easy to get rid of if you can do a control burn, it helps the pH in certain kinds of wetlands. They were at Hilloway Park and he would not feel comfortable doing a controlled burn there because of the proximity to structures, but it was something that was talked about in the natural resources plan. She questioned if that is something we are planning on doing because it is kind of exciting. It is definitely a restorative process that is missing along with larger animals that would've contributed by trampling on it.

Yetka answered that it fits with their restoration goals and if it is appropriate for that habitat and habitat type at specific parks then they would like to use it. There are some limitations in terms of timing, weather and getting crews to be able to actually do the burns. We have to work with the fire department and with the residents that are adjacent so there are always hurdles that we have to jump over. Rozumaski mentioned this idea of transitioning some degraded woodland areas towards savanna, which is something staff is looking at doing and working on at the Cullen Nature Preserve. One idea is that fire will become a useful management tool that can basically do more than individual hands can.

Durbin commented that the tree sale takes place in the spring but he is ready to plant trees in the fall. When his daughter was in kindergarten, her teacher gave her a little seedling. Deer started chewing on it but he built a cage around it. She is now in sixth grade and the tree is almost 15 feet tall. He believes one way to get trees in the ground is to engage kids and give them seedlings. Parents will then find a place for this tree you

got for free. There are three school districts in Minnetonka and we can educate the kids. We have a natural resources person who loves to volunteer in the schools.

Yetka replied that their plan is to install or build a gravel bed nursery. There is an area identified but it is just the matter of constructing it. This will allow us to essentially produce our own stock. It would be a smaller stock than what you would see at the tree sale but it would allow us to have stock available all through the seasons so we can replace trees. For instance, if somebody loses trees to disease, we can offer replacements for that. We could also use it for maybe events where we want to engage kindergartners in planting. That is something we are working on now and we intend on offering smaller trees but more trees.

Durbin asked where they are going to put that.

Yetka answered that right now she believes there is an area identified on property we own by Minnetonka Middle School East, near the water treatment plant. It will be tended by us in Public Works but it won't be physically located at Public Works.

Calvert always thinks about ecosystems and that is what is really broken down. Ecosystems really rely on plant communities and not just trees. She really appreciated the analogy of it being sort of like a giant garden that needs tending. Some of the resident comments they received had to do with doing a wildlife inventory. She knows that we kind of have one but wondered about it. One interesting thing about this report is that it separated out for instance the water from the land and it is also interconnected. It talked about the flora but didn't include the fauna or aquatic because that is a separate thing, yet it all works together. The fauna has to do with how we have over browsing but we also have things that contribute to the survival by being present. She is just wondering how are we going to approach that as a city and if that was part of the plan.

Yetka replied that natural resources are a part of every square inch of our city in essence. In some way we have to kind of focus our efforts and make the most impact. This plan is really focused on restoring the habitats so plants, and the soil that supports the plants have the right species and structure of those communities. The fauna, the wildlife and the birds will come back. In the past, we haven't had the resources to do mammal surveys or formal bird surveys. We haven't felt that's where our efforts should be really spent because we know they are using the resources. The way to influence what is here is by the habitat piece. For instance, birds are going to come to a place that will support them in terms of food and nesting habitat. Instead of focusing on the birds themselves, staff is focusing on what they need to survive and thrive. In terms of the water piece, water is also like climate, it is everywhere and it shapes our landscapes. We can manage water in terms of vegetation and sort of that aquatic community but it is also really impacted by storm water, storm water runoff and storm water management. We have a whole water resources management plan for the city that also talks about water and water quality to really improve the aquatic habitats. This plan can't do it all so that water resource management plan can also influence the things we do and is an important plan that the city has.

Calvert commented that any savanna or prairie was like that because buffalo trampled on it, which does not happen anymore and is one reason why it is so hard to regenerate a prairie. How did the species that we have contribute or degrade? The regeneration part of it is not happening because we don't have the right species to help regenerate what is

there. We can build certain kinds of habitat for certain kinds of birds but when it comes to the whole ecosystem and the regeneration piece of it, she guesses that is where it becomes a giant garden and they kind of have to keep working on it. Regarding the earthworm issue, is there anything we can do to stop it once it is here?

Rozumaski said there is nothing we can do. There has been research on it and they are working on it. Lee Frelich, a Forester at the University of Minnesota who has done a lot of earthworm research promotes that it is controlling the deer population. He thinks the native plants would do ok if it was just the earthworm damage. The issue is having both the earthworm damage and the deer chewing on the plants. The best thing you can do is control the deer population at this point.

Wiersum commented that he lived in the south and knows what kudzu looks like. He doesn't want to see it here and wondered if there has been any evidence of that in Minnetonka or nearby.

Rozumaski said he has seen it nearby and around the metro area.

Wiersum asked him for a recommendation on how to deal with it.

Rozumaski answered that as soon as you see it, dig it out or treat it.

Wiersum asked if you use an herbicide, dig it out or burn it.

Rozumaski replied that with most of these plants, the best thing to do is to mow them during the growing season and apply an herbicide in the fall. Then it will pull the herbicide into the root and kill it.

Kirk said his question has to do with sort of the recovery of some of these areas and whether it is worth it. They took a tour of the Cullen Nature Preserve and talked about bringing back the oak savanna, which he thinks is a great goal but it requires cutting down a lot of trees in order to create it. It is an example of how we can maybe take a targeted area and make that kind of investment happen if we have the resources and the interest from volunteers to really make it sustainable. He wondered at what point do they need to turn our back a bit on what was or what could be and start to create habitat out of what is more sustainable. He asked if Yetka had any comments about how we are turning the corner and needing to diversify species in a way like trees that may not necessarily lend itself well to recreating habitat from pre-settlement.

Yetka answered that is something they struggle with internally. Are we trying to restore back to what was here historically or are we trying to restore to the future? Unfortunately, the answer is that it depends on the specific piece of land, the interest of the community and the interest in volunteers to maintain that type of habitat. We are going to continue to have climate change and invasive species coming in and there is going to be constant pressure on our landscapes that will not change. For instance, with Cullen Nature Preserve they want to try transitioning that to an oak savanna and staff knows it requires some trees being removed to get there. Ultimately, if that is in a manageable community type where we can burn, than that is something that we want to look towards. It is only going to be possible if the soils are going to support it and if the human capacity and labor can support it. It is something that we are always thinking about.

Rozumaski added that Appendix A has plans for each of the top priority parks. They have maps that show the existing play communities, ecological quality and the target plant community. In their professional opinion these could reasonably be restored. There is a strategy of where to start and how to move through it for those top priority parks.

Kirk asked how staff is responding to emails from the Friends of Minnetonka Parks and other comments that they have received regarding the community survey and how we are integrating some of those comments. He also questioned the influence of the Friends of Minnetonka Parks on this plan. He feels that there is an obligation as a councilmember to make sure we are clearly communicating that either these goals can't be met or they can be met and how we are going to move forward. He also asked for staff's perspective on how we are going to partner with them or if they will be treated any different than just another voice in the community.

Yetka talked about the public engagement that has happened so far, some comments staff has heard and their next steps in the process. The draft plan was put on the Minnetonka Matters website on October 22 and it will be up through November 19. This will be going to the park board as a draft in December. Staff hasn't gone through line item by line item of the comments yet to address each one but will do that when they start to finalize the draft. Staff has heard from the Friends of Minnetonka Parks and other community members that the goals are appropriate for this community and there doesn't seem to be any concerns or issues with them. There is an interest in including private land owners; recognizing that they play an important role. Moving into Appendix A, we start to dive into individual parks and sort of high level restoration masterplans. That is one place where we really hope to gain a lot of feedback from the friends groups who are very active in these parks. Staff also had an overarching sense that what they are dealing with are critical elements of our city and we need to be doing more and we need to be doing it faster. That is something that is in some way a policy decision, how fast do we want to go and how fast is the council wanting to accelerate some of the activities that we are proposing. Staff has also been hearing that this is too ambitious and there is no way to achieve all of it. Yetka explained that they are already doing almost everything in this plan to some degree. This plan acts as a guiding compass, focusing our efforts and making sure we are addressing the important pieces and the grand challenges that will impact our natural resources over the next 10-20 years. It also makes sure that we are actually putting our efforts and resources in the right places that we think are important. To answer Kirk's question, staff sees the Friends of Minnetonka Parks group as strong advocates and have been working behind the scenes with all of the individual friends groups for the different parks. Staff has been helping them host events such as the Buckthorn Blitzes. That takes prep time on our staff to help host those and make sure they are doing the projects and doing the work that aligns with our goals. The volunteer program structure that is kind of outlined in one of the Appendices in the plan is certainly a place where we see a huge roll for the friends groups and the Friends of Minnetonka Parks. Staff views them as sort of the eyes and ears and hands of implementing a lot of this work on public lands but we also recognize the influence that they have in the community with their neighbors and other community members. In regards to this plan in particular, we still have the ability through November 19 to receive comments and staff has talked to some of the people in the friends groups about this. Staff expects more comments and will take them into consideration and adapt the plan appropriately. Then moving forward, we do see them as a vehicle to help us achieve these goals so we would continue to work with them.

Kirk had a couple of requests. He said it would be helpful for him and others that communicates with the friends groups that when the report comes back if staff could articulate what areas have been influenced by those comments. Then if their comments are not appropriate, call it out so council and park board knows that it has been turned down. Kirk also was questioned by someone in a friends group about two meetings that were scheduled earlier in the year that specifically allowed feedback for this report but they never happened and weren't rescheduled. He asked staff to address that.

Yetka answered that back in January when staff initially described what the outreach plan and public engagement plan might be for developing this plan, we referenced the idea of potentially having one to two input sessions in the spring. It was also stated on there that it was dependent on the POST Plan public engagement process and timeline and that may influence what they do. One thing that we didn't have at the time was the Minnetonka Matters platform, which allows public input in different ways than a typical web-based platform. Staff chose to go to the park board in April, joined the POST Plan survey and used Minnetonka Matters to include questions related to natural resources. From the survey, they found out what was important to people, what their attitudes and beliefs were and also what they wanted to see happen. At the park board meeting, public comment was taken but she doesn't recall anyone attending the meeting. Currently there is opportunity for public engagement on Minnetonka Matters. This is a technical document and staff welcome's public input. In some ways she feels like it is easier to have something to react to and focus on than it is to adjust here and there with comments, interests and desires. Staff thought it was more efficient to have something for the public to react to versus starting at the ground and building it with them.

Kirk responded that the friends groups would love to have some greater interaction. Maybe having them come in and really explain their position would eliminate some of these emails going back and forth. He's also received feedback that some of the friends group didn't realize that this joint meeting wasn't going to be televised and were disappointed in that.

Ingraham asked if this was a public meeting and if they could attend.

Kirk added that they didn't realize it wasn't televised so due to COVID-19 they were at home waiting for it to come on.

Schaeppi said that we have this challenge of buckthorn and focusing on our public parks and also having these guidance documents such as the Natural Resource Plan. We are using all of our human resources in volunteers to do our best, however, it seems like things are growing faster than we can get to it. He asked as we get into the Appendices that talk about restoring certain parks and certain areas and costs, if they can get more information of where we think we might need more of the high-intense mechanical removal versus the volunteers assistance. He also asked what other cities are doing. He wondered if we are too ambitious or are they going to need grants from the DNR.

Yetka said Appendix A is focused on what we are calling sort of high-level master restoration plans for individual parks. Within that they still need to dial in on what it will actually take to reach our goals for that individual park. At this point staff can't answer where they want to do intensive buckthorn removal with contractors verses volunteers. The reason is because we need to sort of dial into these individual parks and create more focused management plans. However, there is criteria for sort of ranking the priority

parks. The original plan from 1997 only focused on the five community parks. We are focusing our efforts on more than five community parks so we also wanted this plan to help us prioritize which parks we should be working in. Certainly our community parks are high priority but we have other parks that we want to continue working on and maybe capture some of these high quality habitat pieces. This is a way for staff to make a decision such as having a contractor doing the work versus volunteers at a high priority park that has extensive amounts of buckthorn. Then maybe there is another park that doesn't rank quite as high on the priority list but is still important to community members and is more amenable to having volunteer efforts take place.

Rozumaski added that you could think of this as green infrastructure versus grey infrastructure, which is our utilities, streets and transportation. There is a lot of energy and resources that goes into the grey infrastructure and what we get from that. Then look at the resources that go into natural resources and what we get from that, it is not balanced. We have not valued the natural resources long enough to give it the same kind of attention that we give our grey infrastructure. This is not just Minnetonka but nationally.

Schack mentioned that Public Works Director, Will Manchester has a list of street improvement projects that will happen when they are prioritized and that they are all very specific. Sometimes things pop up and we can address that. Likewise, O'Dea also has a trail plan that is a very linear process that they use to implement things. She believes we are getting there according to the appendices but maybe we can focus and develop it more by saying these are our priorities, this is where we are going to start and how we are going to branch off. Schack is also struggling with the friends group because we have a lot of people who are really engaged and have a lot of knowledge but to have 22 environmentalists come in and tell Yetka how to do the environmental work seems counterproductive. Her opinion is that she needs to trust our staff, the people we hired to do the job for this city to help us make those decisions after the input comes into play. She mentioned that because of the next agenda item where they implemented something and then they keep coming back to talk about how it might've been wrong. She thinks we need to have a process, own it and then move through it deliberately or we are going to continue spinning our wheels. The Mayor says this at almost every meeting, "perfect can't be the enemy of the good" because we will never get anywhere if we keep talking about how to make it perfect.

Yetka appreciated that comment. This plan is intended to be a master plan and it's intended to be our guide. The most effective and efficient way we could operate and continue to engage groups like the Friends of Minnetonka Parks is to ensure we are focusing on this plan. This plan represents the priorities at a policy level of this community. In this plan, we have criteria for prioritizing parks and we've listed the parks that we feel our efforts should be put first. That is an area where as a park board and as a council, you have the ability to say these are the parks where we should focus our efforts or we are not going to worry about those right now. We are hoping that this plan can answer those policy questions and be our guide when we have these groups proposing projects to us. There was a struggle with the park board because they weren't sure how those proposed projects were fitting in with our grander plans. We see this as being that guide that can answer whether or not the proposed project is meeting the priorities and if it fits within our plan. If the answer is yes, than maybe that is where we put our efforts and that is where we collaborate and we put our money. If the answer is no, maybe there is an alternative and they'll have to find some other mechanism, funding or sources of labor.

That is sort of how we are hoping this plan down the road is going to get used and help us achieve our goals.

Calvert commented on fragmentation of habitat and how she thinks about the exciting things we have done this last year such as the pollinator lawn ordinance and starting to think about beyond our parks or city natural resources. There are neighborhoods and groups that are generating interest in things like pollinator lawns. She thinks we have an opportunity to create corridors and sort of mini parks in people's yards because we have willing residents to do that with their property. Is there a way to make native plantings more available? There are specific nurseries that specialize in native plants and we could have more information available on our website. Her anniversary is on Earth Day and she always wants to do something for it. She is on the Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee for the National League and they are always pushing them to have our city push Earth Day events. She feels like we might be able to develop themes like that for people to do. There is so much opportunity here and we have pictures of actual groups in our engagement section that have a wealth of interest and she thinks we could build on this and find positive interactions for education. She loved the Adopt-A-Spot program. There were so many good things in this report and so many good ideas and she agrees with staff that this is achievable. She thinks we have a lot of good will in our community. She also agrees with Schack that we have wonderful professionals on our staff and ultimately after the input from residents is taken, she will rely on staff's professional expertise to guide the work. She thinks that we have people with good ideas and she wants to make sure that we get their input but she also thinks that at some point we have professional staff for a reason.

Gabler said as you are describing the master plan, in a way this is our guide and you are taking input of what to put into the guide. It kind of sounds like we are getting into the weeds a little bit, drilling down really into specifics of what we want the plan to be. If he looks at our action items, he wondered if they have seen anything that should be in there that isn't. He thinks we've addressed some of those and that some will always come up especially through feedback. He guesses that people will really be interested in the criteria we are going to use to prioritize projects. At the last park board meeting, they were all over the place because none of them are experts.

Yetka replied that no action was requested for tonight but there were some questions that were posted in the report. She actually added one asking if the timeframe of the proposed plan was in line with the park board and council goals. It will be coming back to the park board for more review but she is happy to take any comments.

Wiersum thought that conversation that we just had was helpful and he thinks we have to think about roles and expectations. The friends groups are clearly passionate and they do a lot of great work for our parks. He thinks they do have to keep roles in perspective and that is a challenge because he thinks they have a lot of great ideas and we rely on them. They play multiple roles, one of them is that they provide a lot of elbow grease as volunteers and they are passionate about our parks and we frankly couldn't be as successful in our parks without people willing to do that. Because they are so involved, it is kind of dangerous for policy groups like the park board and the city council to try and start executing this strategic plan. Similar to the policy makers, the friends groups shouldn't get into the executional details because they lack the expertise. We have to kind of apply the same rules to people who are volunteering but we want to listen to them and respect them. We want public input but at the same time we don't want to pass the

responsibilities of our paid staff to our volunteers. Wiersum wants to be respectful of the friends groups, however, when he hears from residents, he goes with the professionals because he is an amateur at so much of this. He thinks we have to apply that same standard to our staff and to people from the community who have good ideas but at the same time we trust the professionals to tell us whether or not those ideas make sense for Minnetonka.

Kirk thinks how Wiersum described the friends group is accurate. He questioned if the friends are going to be perceived as a partner moving forward or another group in the community to receive feedback from. If we want them to be partners, then we need to make sure that we are recognizing their input at a different level. If we don't want them to be partners, than let's call that out.

Wiersum thinks that is a fair point but he doesn't know the answer to the question.

Schaeppi asked if the friends are just community advocates. He understands that this is super high-level and we've talked about staff being the experts and he agrees but if we are talking about another 15 years, he wants the opportunity to actually go through these parks. He would love to have staff or a consultant walk him through each of these parks and see why this is a good idea. In terms of timing, he will leave it to the park board for them to talk about. He doesn't understand why it should be done in December and how they should know if this is what they should be doing by then. For him, the timeline is too fast.

Ingraham thought the friends input was appropriate and appropriately timed. He thinks that their perception is that they were behind the curve, but when he looks at the timeline for input and where we are at in the development of the plan it seems like that came at the right time. This is not a plan yet, it is a plan in development. He thinks they made a lot of good points and that it needs to be considered and taken into consideration and done. He's not sure how you weigh one groups input more than others. Clearly in the concept of giving input and giving suggestions, he looks at the friends as being more knowledgeable and more engaged but you could have an individual who is as knowledgeable and engaged. He thinks the biggest difference is the added value of volunteers. Clearly, when you go on the tours and you see the amount of engagement, they are very valuable to us and our natural spaces. The one thing about the plan that was hard for him was if you go to the budgeting part in the Appendix, it is hard for him to know what our commitment is and how much resources there are. He wasn't sure if it is at this point or later when the plan is done that they need to know what they can afford to do. We have a pretty good size budget today to begin with but he doesn't have the sense that it's adequate and he thinks the comments they've had around the table support additional investment. His question was how much are we investing today and how much should we be investing.

Yetka stated that what she is hearing is that there is an interest in having more information in terms of the resources we have now and what it would take to get where we want to be. There is some of that in here, the budget information that is presented is focusing on the parks that were prioritized in the table and what it would achieve over 20 years to have high-quality habitat in all those areas and be maintaining that year after year. There was information on a slide related to our existing budget for the natural resources division. Our stewardship fund, we spend about \$140,000 a year we have allocated for maintenance activities, plus we have ICW crew which is a crew that we use and we access once a week to help us do maintenance activities. We have forestry funds

that go towards the woodland and tree component of the activities that we do. She assumes you would like to see sort of a better understanding of what we have now and the resources we have relate to where we want to get to. She can't necessarily answer that today because we first have to figure out if this is what we want to do to achieve these priorities, do we have the resources that it will take or do we want to accelerate this process. Assuming this plan gets adopted at some point, we would get into the implementation phase. That's where we would start to dial in on the actual projects that we want to be implementing, whether it means we would need to request more funds that would go through the budgeting process or if we would use the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process to identify funds for specific large scale restoration pieces for instance. She thinks it is hard to answer that question because some of that will come down the road once this plan is adopted but she does hear that you would like to see a better explanation and connection.

Calvert thought the goals and objectives were appropriate, the criteria were good and the elements were pretty comprehensive. She is also aware that there are members of the community including people in the friends groups that feels that it is an aggressive timeline. She doesn't want the perfect to be the enemy of the good but she feels like we need to get started on something. Climate change is not stopping to wait for us to make a decision and you know we kind of need to do the things we need to do. It's a high-level plan that we can shape as time goes by and take all of that input in. Calvert is not entirely uncomfortable with it because she thinks we can keep shaping it and we'll be deciding on funding as we go through the process because economic conditions are going to change and so are environmental conditions. We may be reacting to things that we don't even know. Page two says to revisit habitat quality assessments every five to ten years. The climate is changing faster than it used to and we have a natural resources plan from 1997, she thinks we need to revisit that on a more aggressive timeframe. In terms of the groups that are providing feedback, the thing that we have to remember is that the friends are passionate about our parks and they do wonderful work. She thinks we need to value it, honor it and use it but there are also other groups that did more restoration work in Lone Lake Park than the friends. One of them is the mountain bike group that did 500 plus hours of actual habitat restoration and she thinks they are not the only partner. She thinks we can view them as a partner but they aren't going to be the only partner. The thing she loves about this plan is that there are various interest groups such as a gardening group or sports group that have invested interest in restoring habitat and we have to view them all as partners. Maybe the friends groups will become more important to parks in some ways but we have a lot of partners that do a lot of work and they are all very valuable.

Schack thought it was also important to reassure people that this is fluid and that we work on budgeting as we go and staff will tell them what it takes to implement things. An example is the trail plan and how Schaeppi presented a good argument from moving some things around and reprioritizing based on community feedback. They were compelled by that and made it happen. That is how she envisions this will work as well. Things will come up or opportunities or grants that they will want to take advantage of and they'll move things around and prioritize in real time. She is comfortable making a decision now knowing that it is not written in stone.

Wiersum thinks their eyes are bigger than their stomachs to a certain extent. We have a lot we want to do and we are going to run out of resources before we get this done. He doesn't think that is a reason not to move forward because as Calvert mentioned, climate

change is not going to wait for us. He thinks because of climate change that as a city, decisions are going to be made in years ahead. Some of us may not even be here when these decisions get made but a greater portion of our budget is going to have to go towards natural resources and climate mitigation because that is the situation we are confronted with. We may have to narrow the scope and focus on one or two items and get that done. The job is going to be big and we are going to need resources, grants and volunteer groups to say they believe in this. We are going to need all of the above but he thinks we want to get moving; keep it high-level but then focus on some areas where we can execute and really get some things done.

Yetka reiterated that staff is still accepting comments and this will be coming back to the park board as a more final draft plan. Staff can be very clear on the comments and the information received and how it is influencing the plan. She thinks we've already seen some good ideas that we can incorporate into the plan. Staff will provide a reason if there is an area that they can't incorporate. The anticipated date for the final draft to come back to council is December 20. Staff would like to stick with that date as a goal and at that point it would become our adopted plan. It would then be put on our website and moved into the implementation phase where we would start to propose projects, go through the budgeting process and capital improvement process to sort of weigh some of those decisions and have the council and park board weigh in.

C. Lone Lake Park Multi-use Mountain Bike Trail Metrics

Woeste, Jesse Izquierdo, Recreation Program Manager and Yetka gave the report.

Durbin did some calculations and said the average daily use when the trail was open was about 80-90 users. He was impressed with that being the first year and because they weren't really sure if it was going to be used. In regards to the metric on who is biking versus driving there, he wouldn't mind not seeing that metric next year. He wondered how long they are going to have this ultra-intense look at Lone Lake Park. As this becomes more established and more accepted, we might not have to need such a detailed look at this in a couple of years.

Ingraham complimented people that went thru the process to do the trail because he wasn't on the park board yet. It has been a huge success and he thinks the amount of volunteer efforts of all those involved is really impressive and much appreciated. He uses Lone Lake Park at least three days a week. He doesn't mountain bike but he was familiar with the informal trails and was there at least two days per week before the trail was built. He thinks a huge success is the amount of people that are accessing areas they couldn't access before. Going back to the earlier discussion on active versus passive recreation, he really doesn't know where you draw the line between the two. He knows soccer or pickleball would be active but for passive he isn't sure if walking, hiking or running is passive. In this case, we've opened up a significant amount of space for people to experience a kind of environment that they couldn't have otherwise experienced in Minnetonka.

Wiersum remembered the night where the concept of doing a review report came up at the city council. Then councilmember Mike Happe said that it isn't their goal to wreck the park, which, he thought wouldn't happen with the mountain bike trail. He thought it would be good to do a post analysis to see how we were doing. Along with what Ingraham said, we haven't wrecked the park in any way and he thinks it has been very successful. He is

mostly proud of the fact that it gets kids off their phones. It is bringing people to a level of activity that can be done in our city that is distinctive and he doesn't think the aesthetics of the park have been hurt. He wanted to say that the change is not significant but the benefit is significant. He thinks that is a big win and it took a lot of guts for a lot of people to support this. Our staff made it happen and dealt with a lot of push-back from our residents. It was a divided issue and that park board meeting on August 26, 2018 was 50/50. It was not clear but he thinks we did something that benefited the city and he thinks anybody and everybody who had something to do with it should be proud of that. He also thinks that we probably have developed new relationships with the Friends of Lone Lake Park and certainly with MORC. He thinks there are some positives in that too. As we move forward, he isn't worried that we ruined the park so he thinks perhaps we could work to simpler reporting on an annual review because he thinks we've demonstrated that. He doesn't like to put the staff through unnecessary work and wants to focus those resources on getting this plan moving forward and implementing it and use that time more effectively.

Kirk said Lone Lake Park is in Ward 1 and Friends of Lone Lake Park are in Ward 1 so he wanted to sum up their concerns on side casting, berming the trees and wider trails. Also he wanted to ask the council whether or not the trail met the definition that was presented to the council three years ago. They are worried about the fauna being disturbed because of the side casting, both the dirt and the brush and they are concerned about the trees being bermed and whether or not the trees will be damaged in any way. Also, they are concerned with the width of the trail, which hopefully will be resolved as more of the trail closes after construction. He has seen a number of these mountain bike trails and they do end up looking like every other mountain bike trail. He also wanted to address the number of volunteer hours that Calvert brought up earlier because he thought it was a bit negative towards the friends groups. He was actually happy to see that the friends were volunteering because they were pretty disgruntle a year or two ago. He would have expected that MORC was there in force because that was kind of part of the agreement. He didn't think any of them had an expectation that the friends and MORC would be out there pulling buckthorn the next day together but he was happy that the friends were still putting time and effort into the park. He agrees that we don't need a full report next year but it is nice to hear how a program we made this big investment in is going. He thinks trying to define what active means is going to be important. As we describe an area that we want to try and leave in a more preserved state that everybody can feel comfortable that they don't have to risk something that they would perceive as being active. He had the same argument a few years ago on whether or not everyone walking through the woods is any less active than mountain biking through the woods. Now it is mountain biking or walking through the woods in a more controlled way. The only comment he had was that a few people had concerns about it being a multi-use trail. He will ask if they walk the trail and if they do walk it, do they come across bikers. They're sometimes a little reluctant to say that they are friendly and polite and that they greet people when they go by. The only comment he had was that a few people had concerns about it being a multi-use trail. If you walk the trail and come across bikers, they are always friendly and polite and they usually greet people when they go by. His question is whether or not we should post something telling walkers to walk against the bike traffic. Overall, he thinks it has been a great success.

Calvert stated that she wanted to make very clear that when she makes a positive comment about a group that is not the friends, it is not a slam against the friends. She is allowed to call out the good work, her whole point was that in addition to the work that the

friends does, there are other groups in our city that do great work in our parks so please don't put words in her mouth. She also lives in Ward 1 and was on the council conversing with the people that are now the friends as a councilmember as this came up so please don't put words in her mouth because that was not a slam against the friends. She wanted to make sure the friends understand that's not a slam, she is just saying there are other people, groups, organized groups that also contribute to the health and success of our parks.

Coakley commented that Kirk summed up the questions she also received from the friends group. One thing that she requested is to be really clear with them on what has happened and what the city has done to address these questions so they don't have to keep coming back to it. As a councilmember, she doesn't mind getting into the weeds if they have residents contacting them because that is the only way we can get something solved.

Woeste said we can put together a response.

Schack had her reservations about the trail and she thinks it has been wildly successful. Her concern was more on calling it a multi-use trail given the density but it has been proven that it's worked out. She thinks that is really positive and she is glad to hear it. She thinks the width issue may have something to do with the multi-use component and that there has been a lot of foot and snowshoeing traffic. She is satisfied with hearing that some of the berming has been addressed by the forester. She is also comfortable that the goals have been met and we can move on from getting into this deep on an annual basis.

Schaeppi wanted to confirm that everything has been hashed out. He thinks what we are finding out is that individual active sports separate from team sports are going to have a future in Minnetonka and we are going to see what those are, whether it is skateboarding or other items. He looks forward to the park board's discussion on these and bringing their ideas to the council. He concurs with the comments before about getting young kids off their phones and doing something challenging. All of this is healthy stuff so he looks forward to more of these active uses as well.

Wiersum is really intrigued and interested in the ebike question that was raised tonight and he thinks it deserves a look. He knows someone who is 70 years old and was a big skier but had to have part of his foot amputated and he isn't as able to do a lot of things now. He got an ebike and it set him free. He gets a little concerned about somebody trying to whip around on the trails at 28 mph on an ebike. That does give him some hesitation and that is probably not what is going to happen because it is impractical that it will go that fast. On the other hand, he thinks that from a mobility perspective it is kind of a cool concept. The mobility aspect to him is a reason to do it but he can go both ways.

Calvert agrees with mobility. This is something that we said no to and she can feel it, she can hear it and she thinks she would have some grave reservations about it. This has been very contentious and it clearly remains really contentious and she just doesn't feel like tangling with it. She has taken a hard vote for something that she felt committed to and she thinks for herself she is kind of at her limit and we are good. In terms of the berming and constantly coming back, we made a commitment and she thinks we really do need to look periodically at the impact on the trees and make sure that we did what we said we were going to do on the trail. She does think there is some need to move on. The

natural resources staff told us the berming is not a concern anymore and that they've looked at all the trees. She just walked a good portion of the trail the other day with her husband who worked with natural resources for 40 years and he had no concerns with the berming. She is going to take her natural resources professional staff at their word. We looked at runoff, erosion and the erosion socks and they have done what they need to do. If the side casting really is going to be a problem for native species regeneration then we need to take care of it but if it's not, she will leave it to natural resources. As far as she is concerned, she would love to be able to move on but she also wants to make sure we are meeting our obligation. She feels like we've met the promises that we made. She thinks in large that the trail meets the goals that we sought so she will leave it to the natural resources staff to make sure the trail is healthy and that we are doing what we promised to do, not only to the Friends of Lone Lake Park but the rest of the community.

Kirk supports ebikes but he thinks there may need to be some kind of governor on it like a speed limit. For the sake of accessibility, he thinks it is inarguable if we have the ability to have people with mobility issues still enjoy the trail.

Scheappi asked if staff knows MORC's opinion on ebikes.

Izquierdo replied that they are currently one of only two trails in the Twin Cities or maybe state that doesn't allow ebikes. They have a classification system, which he believes is one through three. All of the other trail systems follow a similar guideline and he believes class two is allowed. People that buy these ebikes know it is a mountain bike specific bike that regulates the speed and has a lot of other regulations. It is the type of bike that the industry is building to meet these certain standards to reduce any potential impact to the trails. There are people out there that will probably say there's hard data and science that supports an impact of an ebike being equivalent to a non-ebike. We haven't necessarily seen that, we also haven't dug super deeply into it. The industry is pushing for it and we are seeing more of these types of bikes being sold in the stores and more of a desire for them. If this was something that we wanted to pursue, staff would go out there and talk to people and try to bring in as much information as possible.

Gabler asked if staff would have that information when it comes to the park board.

Woeste said we just wanted to take the temperature on the subject of ebikes tonight. We got a little bit of mixed feelings but if we are trying to be inclusive and accessible, we will do some research and at least bring it to the park board for review.

Schaeppi is open to the ebike discussion because he would be surprised if an older person on an ebike is going faster than the 25 year old bombing through the trail.

Wiersum said the park board should take a look and he thinks staff should look into it. He questioned what the unattended consequences are. You think about allowing ebikes and setting the rules and then electric mini bikes come along and someone follows suit against the city because electric mini bikes aren't allowed but the ebike is. We should see what experiences at other places are like. It's what you don't know that gets you. Let's take a thorough look so that we can think through the unattended consequences if we were to make a change. He sees Calvert's point as well on relaxing the rules on something that has been this challenging. He thinks that is something he wants to be careful with as well.

Gabler said his very first park board meeting was the first meeting this subject was brought up so he got to live through the whole thing. It is worth having the discussion.

Durbin commented that if we are talking ADA compliance, they could get someone who would like to use an ebike for that argument and also get input from the city attorney. We could go through and have the discussion and get the pros and cons, information from MORC and any other information in one package so the park board could make an informed decision. He definitely wants to hear it out because it's not an urgent need and we time to get more information.

Dane Kromer, MORC representative, wanted to make clear that they are talking about a class of ebikes that only allows pedal assist which only gives you added power of about 10 watts of whatever you are actually peddling. They are no faster downhill and they do help people pedal up the hills which are steep at Lone Lake. They are on board with it and they kind of have been all along because of all the people that can't bike except with pedal assist.

Ingraham said it would be interesting to get Three Rivers Park District's perspective. If they aren't having issues, they should have one soon. The Lake Minnetonka Trail is non-motorized vehicles but now there are people on the non-pedal assist bikes. They just crank the throttle and keep their feet steady. They are D-Class bikes and people are commuting to school on the Lake Minnetonka Trail going 20-25 mph. This is not about Lone Lake but it would be interesting to know Three Rivers Park District's perspective on ebikes relative to trails too.

4. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline

Kathy Kline
Recreation Administrative Coordinator