

# RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

## MEETING MINUTES: JANUARY 9, 2019 – 6:00 PM

LOCATION: Parks & Recreation Department

2015 Van Dyke Street, Maplewood, MN 55109

Attending: Jessica Pitzel (1), Gale Pederson (2), Brian Tempas (3), Bryan Shirley (5), Melissa Wenzel (6), Candy Petersen (7), Mark Erickson (AL), Leah Shepard (AL)  
Mark McCabe and Angie Marlette

Not in Attendance: Metric Giles (4)

The meeting was called to order at 6:04pm by Leah Shepard.

### **Welcome Newly Appointed Commission Members:**

Leah welcomed newly appointed commission members Jessica Pitzel and Mark Erickson. Each meeting attendee introduced themselves and welcomed the members.

### **Approval of the Agenda:**

Leah asked for approval of the January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 agenda. Candy Petersen made a motion to approve and Gale Pederson seconded. All approved. *Motion carried.*

### **Approval of the Minutes:**

Leah asked for a motion to accept the December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 meeting minutes. Gale made the motion and Brian Tempas seconded. All Approved. *Motion carried.*

### **2019 MN DNR Conservation Partners Legacy Grants Received, Soil & Water Conservation Division Update on Current Projects: Justin Townsend, Environmental Resource Specialist**

Justin Townsend gave background on the forming of the Soil & Water Conservation Division (SWCD). Conservation Partners Legacy Grants (CPL), through the DNR is Legacy money that have Metro available funds which were applied for and received by the SWCD for Battle Creek and Tamarack Nature Center. The goal at Tamarack is to clear the invasive black locust and buckthorn and convert to prairie with an oak savannah. Oak savannah is one of the most endangered ecosystems in the country with less than 1% left. This is a three-year project with most work to be done by contractors. Total fund \$88,399,000 with a required match of \$8,841.00. The work to be done at Battle Creek Regional Park is mainly buckthorn removal behind waterworks and near the baseball fields. Once cleared, oaks will be added to enhance the age structure of that area. This also a three-year project. Both projects will begin this winter once the grants have been signed. More information is available on the Ramsey County Parks Planning page. The grant is for \$136,360.00 with a \$13,640.00 county match. Jessica asked what plans are in place to prevent the invasives return. Both Mark and Justin explained funding mechanisms and resources (MN Conservation Core) that are in place for this. There was more conversation surrounding citizen work in clearing invasives. There was a new grant from the MN Department of Agriculture called the Noxious Weed Grant in which the SWCD received \$15,000.00 to assist in controlling specific invasive species. A link to the DNR site that shows these weeds will be sent out. Justin gave more details on the specific weeds that SWCD will target. Finally, a grant from the MN Soil and Water Resources is given to seal wells. Andrea Prichard manages this grant. Justin explained the need of well-sealing and the hazard of unused wells left open to contaminate the ground water supply. The grant will cover the sealing of 115-140 wells. Mapping the location of these unused wells is part of the funding. Justin answered questions regarding the finding, reporting, and process of sealing the wells.

### **Election of Chairperson & Vice Chairperson:**

Leah offered to continue as Chair and asked if there was anyone that would like to be Vice Chairperson. Bryan Shirley was asked to run the election voting. A verbal ticket with Leah Shepard as Chairperson and Bryan Shirley as Vice Chair was cast and unanimously voted on in favor of by the Commission.

### **Annual Review of Commission By-Laws:**

Mark gave a summary of the racial equity language proposed to be added to the purpose statement section of the by-laws. Mark consulted with the Ramsey County Organizational Development Team for input on the language. Bryan recommended to use the language “apply” or “use” but not both, as well as voiced concern on using the vague word “lens”. Leah summarized the sentence to be added as, “Members shall apply a racial equity analysis when reviewing and advising on matters presented to the commission.” The single use of “chairman” was changed to “chairperson”. Candy moved to approve and adopt these changes, seconded by Bryan. *Motion carried.* Melissa Wenzel asked when was the last time the Commission met only quarterly. Based upon meeting minutes, monthly meeting has happened for the last few years. Bryan recalled that often no meetings were held in the summer months or if the agenda was light. The past consensus seems to have been if there is content a meeting is warranted. If the standard is monthly, Melissa would suggest changing the by-laws to reflect this. However, if there is a chance that it will not always be monthly then no change is proposed.

### **State of The Parks Address:**

Currently, there is no date for the delivery of the State of the Park Address. Mark reviewed the purpose and procedure behind the address as well as the many highlights that can be used (Soil & Water coming on board with Parks & Recreation). Leah reviewed what was done last year and that the probable time frame would be February - April. Another purpose is to seek feedback and ask questions of and from the county board. The Commission members requested ample notice so that may attend the meeting.

### **Legislative Platform: Mark McCabe**

This is a non-bonding year, which they could bond but it is typically every other year. One of the projects is the Battle Creek Snow Making project. Mark gave some background of this project, its history, community support and importance. Meetings have begun through the Metropolitan council on Legacy funding from which Ramsey County receives operational and maintenance funding for the Regional park system. Last year there was \$10 million dollars allocated through the Met Council for the whole Regional parks system and Ramsey County is allotted a percentage of that. Melissa asked if there is a need to call to action for officials. Mark encouraged the members to contact their representatives for support on this project. Leah voiced the previously discussed concern about ensuring that the hill would still be available for the neighborhood kids to use. Commission members will be sent the updated winter recreation flyer that is being shared to garner support.

### **2019 Work Plan:**

Mark reviewed the newly compiled 2019 work plan. This is meant to be a work in progress and fluid document. Leah and Mark will meet ahead of each month’s meeting to firm up agenda. Commission members discussed the items with Mark elaborating on specific details. Leah suggested training in July on the Racial Equity toolkit, once Ramsey County has approved use.

### **Review February Agenda (Attachment) Review Work Plan**

Item stricken from agenda. As stated previously, Mark and Leah will meet to discuss the next meeting’s agenda and review the work plan.

### **Directors Report: Mark McCabe**

Mark thanked all commission members for their participation at tonight's meeting. The commission also participates in staffing the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation booth at the Fair as well as Earth Day cleanup days. The goal is to have more sites that have volunteer cleanup and commission member coordination. There also may be more opportunities from the Soil & Water Conservation Division. Parks had also partnered with Environmental Health to distribute rain barrels and compost bins. The Friends of the Parks raise money by selling trees as well as selling memorial trees.

Vadnais Dome Update: After giving a brief history of the collapse for the new commission members, Mark updated that on January 22, 2019 another workshop will be held with the County Board to discuss options and answer questions. It seems there are potential community partners. The evidence thus far has shown that turf is valuable and there is a shortage of space in the county.

Golf Study Report: Currently waiting for final report, executive report has been delivered. Mark reviewed some of the key findings.

Parks staff continue to work on tree trimming and trail clearing. This is an enormous task to keep up on.

Hiring: The Director of Operations job has posted and closed. HR is working on the applicant list with hope that it will be available soon. There are positions open for both a Maintenance & Operations staff and at Tamarack Nature Center. Bob Azure also joined the Finance team filling Barb Breyers old position.

Brian Tempas asked if there are any additional trails planned. Scott Yonke can come to speak of that and more specifically the Bruce Vento Regional Trail, Rice Creek Regional Trail extension, Lake Links Trails. Not much for new trails as there is a lot of redesign and fixing of existing trails needed.

Benches History: Active Living Ramsey County had a large grant for installation of benches. This has been completed. As for future extension, inventory would need to be checked on with Connie Bernardy. The parks are hitting a saturation point for benches memorial and likewise. There is a move toward memorial trees and the replacement of aging benches.

### **Report from Chair and Other Commission Members:**

Leah pointed out By-laws 6,7,8 and how they require an outreaching of commission members. Leah and Mark can assist in outlining what opportunities exist.

Brian Shirley encourages the new members to ask questions and not to be intimidated with all the new information to learn.

Melissa attended a local land use meeting discussing the recent death at McKnight and North of Upper Afton Road. Would like to share the information that is obtained at these meetings. They have a many suggestions such as lane reduction and a refuge for pedestrians. The commission would appreciate any updates that Melissa can provide.

Reminder that Gale Pederson is receiving the Commission Member Award from the Minnesota Recreation and Parks association Friday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Jon Oyanagi is receiving the Clifton E French Professional Lifetime Award as well.

### **Adjournment**

Leah moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:34pm.