



RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

February 13, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Jessica Pitzel (1), 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) and Gale Pederson (2), Brian Tempas (3)

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm by Leah Shepard.

Approval of the Agenda:

Candy Petersen motioned for approval of the February 13, 2019 Agenda and Melissa Wenzel seconded. All Approved. *Motion carried.*

Approval of the Minutes:

Leah asked for a motion to accept the January 9, 2019 meeting minutes. Mark Erickson made the motion and Jessica Pitzel seconded. All Approved. *Motion carried.*

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Cost Share Program with Lake Associations: Justin Townsend, Soil & Water Conservation Division

Funding for aquatic invasive species is much more substantial than terrestrial invasive species. In 2014 the legislature passed a bill to put \$10 million into AIS prevention. \$97,000 was given to Ramsey County (overseen by the DNR) based on the number of boat and trailer-able launches and fluctuates year to year. The majority is designated for water craft inspection. Both the DNR and the county provide these inspections for detection and education. Some of the aquatic invasive species that are looked for include zebra mussel (present now in Bald Eagle, Johanna and White Bear Lakes), Eurasian Water Milfoil, and fish virus' (viral hemorrhagic septicemia. These can disrupt food chains with one of the bigger issues is the effective on the recreational use of the lakes and decrease in property values. A task force was formed with neighborhood and lake associations to form a plan. Justin then reviewed the mission and 2019 Work Plan with tactics and measures of success. Ramsey County is on the cutting edge of AIS prevention and minimization of existing infestations. Justin will email the plan with those interested. Any organization or person in Ramsey county interested in using funds for an AIS issue will complete the grant application detailing project specifics with impacts and measurable outcomes. Mark commented that since this is such a new program, Soil & Water will be able to use this tool to sort all the requested projects and chose those that are most likely to have the greatest impact. Also, if an area is not represented this can be tracked and acted upon.

Mark Erickson asked if the money goes to the private groups or is it all spent by Ramsey County. In the past it has all been spent by Ramsey county. With this application, it can be expanded to a Watershed District, Lake Association or individual as long as they can prove they have the fiscal capacity to carry out what they are planning on doing.



Mark added, what sparked the idea of this application was to leverage funds from cost sharing groups (i.e. Lake Associations) so that even more can be accomplished. Justin emphasized that this program will strengthen those partnership and assist the county in staying on the cutting edge of this very new science.

Melissa asked what is done when an infestation is established. Generally chemical treatment is done which Lake Associations pay for to allow recreational use of the lake. The County is trying to move toward more effective bio-controls. For example, Lake Johanna will be introducing native Milfoil Weevils that will host shift onto Eurasian Water Milfoil. Otter Lake is an example of this working. More discussion continued on the variety of control measures, other invasive species present and partnerships with other departments and lake associations. Justin explained that White Bear Lake has been shown to be a feeder lake, spreading AIS's to smaller lakes if boats are not properly cleaned.

Candy is interested in the application for Silver Lake in North St. Paul and the Lake Association. Justin will release the grant application when the DNR gives final review to ensure nothing is missing from the application.

Master Plan Overview & Planning Update: Gus Blummer, Planning and Development

Gus introduced himself and explained that he has been with Ramsey County Parks for 8 years and is a Landscape Architect, but essentially a project manager. The majority of his time is with design work, construction and public involvement processes. The department has recognized that many of the existing Master Plans need updating and a plan has been put in place to ensure this happens. Gus begin with explains of what a masterplan is, why they are needed, how they are used and what specifics are in them. *Please refer to the attachments for this meeting.* Master Plans are the mechanisms to get funding for the parks. A county park Master Plan will flow into other municipalities planning and thus needs their residents' input. At its core, a Master Plan also establishes the need for long term capital planning. Regional Parks Master Planning is dictated by state statute. Any funding for a regional park or enhancements the master plan must be updated. *Please refer to the attachments.*

The commission then reviewed the attachment of what is included in a Master Plan. Next, Gus explained the flow chart of the master planning process and all the steps involved including the circular public engagement process at each level of development of the plan. The final master plan recommendation is submitted to the County Board for approval and if it's a regional park, multiple municipalities and finally the Metropolitan Council for approval. Amendments can be made, especially if the neighborhood has changed or significant time has passed since its creation. Amendments also follow the same master plan process which ensures public engagement and desirable facilities.

In regard to a plan that encompasses all parks is the System Plan, it is located inside the Ramsey County 2040 Comprehensive Plan. This plan is mandated by the Metropolitan Council and updated every 10 years. The Comprehensive plan has been passed by the Board and submitted to Met Council for review. Through the ADA transition plan, all Parks facilities were evaluated for compliance which is also used when making these master plans.



Gus then explained the different funding sources for regional parks and that they are all administered through the Met council. If the facility is a county facility it is funded through the County's capital improvement process (CIP) and County Capital Asset Management Program (CCAMP).

Melissa if a Master Plan would address how pedestrian/bicycling is impacted around the parks especially considering the recent pedestrian deaths in the Battle Creek area. Definitely, multi-model access and identifying if there is a need while working with Public works and municipalities on adjacent roadways to make them safe is a part of the master planning process.

Mark then explained the County re-organization and service team creation and that Parks falls within the Economic Growth and Development team. Public Works and Parks are on this team and collaborate.

Jessica asked if these master plans are viewable and how the public is notified of their creation? Parks uses email, social media and regular mail to notify public of community engagement sessions. The community engagement action planning guide covered next will go into some of these challenges.

The commission reviewed the Gantt chart outlining the upcoming master plan projects. There are other plans that are not up to date, but funding has not been secured. The goal is to work on 1-2 every year.

Leah asked what sort of mechanisms are created to make sure these plans are aligning alongside the goals. What is the accountability? This commission, the different municipalities, ultimately the county board and even the Met council depending on the park type. Leah would like to see metrics on how the needle is moving in meeting these master plan goals. The funding will determine how much of the master can be accomplished. Melissa commented that it would be wise to document these items that are outstanding.

The Commission members have asked to be involved in the very beginning of this process. Jessica pointed out that the commission can be aware of when the community engagement meetings are happening and encourage others to attend.

The next master plan that will be brought to the commission is Rice Creek in March.

Community Engagement Action Plan: Mark McCabe

Mark introduced the Ramsey County Community Engagement Action Planning guide. All departments are involved in some way in community engagement. This plan was created by the Policy & Planning Department so that the county can have a uniform way in which to do this which also encompasses county initiatives such as Racial Equity.

1. Project Scoping: Identifying the need for public engagement, questions to consider
2. Identifying Who to Engage: Who are the community stakeholders, who will be impacted
3. Developing Effective, Inclusive and Meaningful Engagement Strategies: How to engage, being flexible, adaptable and responsive to community needs and changing circumstances
4. Assessing our Community Engagement Process: What are we doing well and what needs to be done differently in how we approach community engagement
 - Strategies
 - Measurable outputs
 - Short-term outcomes



Once this guide is finalized it will be shared with the group. A contractor has been hired specifically for the Battle Creek Master plan to do community engagement. *Leah asked if follow-up with respondents is addressed.* Gus explained the importance on setting expectations at the Community engagement meeting on how their feedback will be used. Since there are several meetings where is just listening, there is ample opportunity to address concerns and handle feedback. Comments are also posted anonymously on the projects page online.

Director's Report:

Mark informed the group that the final Golf System Study has been posted online. The Board does not want to be in a position to heavily subsidize golf. There is very little put into marketing. Prices are set 2 years at a time, which is not done in the business and needs to be more flexible. Looking at contracts the county has and their timing. Overall, our operators are quality operators and the courses are in good shape and will remain so with some infrastructure improvements. The courses do generate money which is returned to the County to fund other Parks programs.

There was a Vadnais Dome workshop with the County Board in January. A consensus was reached to build another turf facility. There is a gap between what insurance can payout and the cost of a new facility. Without a new facility there is a half million operating deficit that is needed to pay back it loan. Ideally, the community would be able to fund \$1 million and we are looking at family friendly naming rights. There was also direction to engage the community on other desired uses. Mark explained the very general timeline with the plan to re-open late 2020.

Its Snowing! The ski communities are happy. Ken Pelto is running a free winter recreation program at Keller Regional Park. Tamarack summer registration opened and the first day there was \$80,000 of programming purchased with several sessions filled. The registration system handled the flow very well.

Report from The Chair & Other Commission Members:

Mark shared a message from Metric suggesting that different districts serve as site hosts. Improve community engagement by holding this meeting in conjunction. *The Commission is open to this.* The meeting would need to be slightly different to cater to their needs. Bryan commented that this was routinely done in the past. Discussion ensued regarding different topics.

Melissa asked how Parks is going to be involved in the McKnight incident. Since we have the Master Plan coming up that is our greatest opportunity to become involved. Public works will have the most immediate involvement in this. *Brian suggested draft a resolution to the commissioners from the members.* *Melissa will consider this and was able to give an update on the community meeting that recently occurred.* Short-term and long-term solutions were both discussed.

Adjournment

Candy and Melissa simultaneously moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:52pm.



NEXT MEETING: MARCH 13, 2019
PARKS & RECREATION ADMINISTRATION BUILDING