

**RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JOINT MEETING WITH WHITE BEAR LAKE PARK ADVISORY
COMMISSION**

November 15, 2018 – 6:30 PM

**Boat Works Commons Community Room
4495 Lake Ave South, White Bear Lake, MN**

Ramsey County Members Attending: Leah Shepard (Chair), Metric Giles, Melissa Wenzel, Candy Petersen and Brian Tempas

White Bear Lake Members Attending: Bill Ganzlin (Chair), Bryan Belisle and Mike Shepard

Not in Attendance: Louise Krohn, Gale Pederson, Bryan Shirley, Kong Vang,
Staff: Scott Yonke, Angela Marlette, Kris Lencowski, Ellen Richter (City Manager WBL)

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm by Bill Ganzlin.

Approval of the Agenda:

Bill motioned for approval of the November 15, 2018 agenda and Candy Petersen seconded.

Motion carried

Approval of the Minutes:

Leah moved for acceptance of the October 10, 2018 Minutes and called a vote for approval. All Approved.

Motion carried.

Introductions of White Bear Lake and Ramsey County Attendees

Each attendee introduced themselves, their affiliations and how long they have been in their positions. Ellen Richter is representing White Bear Lake city staff. Normally the Public Works Director would be present but is new and will be starting after Thanksgiving as well as the Superintendent of Parks and Facilities.

Overview of the Park Systems:

Bill gave an overview of the Boat Works community space and its use as a public space that is still being developed. The White Bear Lake Park Advisory Commission meets monthly and reviews future planning options, entertains community input on subjects such as potential land use, vandalism and encroachment. The commission has been able to build a park improvement fund through several mechanisms such as the sale of the Manitou Golf Course. Budgeting and planning is typically five years out. Between four to five site visits are done each summer to inspect and prioritize improvements with Public Works. Bill outlined the variety of parks ranging from neighborhood parks that draw immediate residents to larger parks, such as Matoska, attracting regional users. The demands of use have changed over the years ranging from Bocce Ball, softball, and skateboarding and now Lacrosse and disk golf. Lakewood hills is the premier park with a dedicated user base that has softball and disc golf is being piloted there. Bryan Belisle would be interested in hearing thoughts from Ramsey County members as well as collaboration ideas and suggestions on handling those evolving uses. Parks has always been one of the top benefits that residents can receive from a city. Those changing needs are always a challenge to manage.

Scott Yonke gave an overview of the Ramsey County parks system highlighting that it is a natural resource based system with over 7,500 acres with six regional parks, six regional trails, nine County parks, open space areas, ten Hockey arenas, one golf dome and five golf courses. Some unique items are the Tamarack nature center and the links within the regional trail system. Kris Lencowski explained the programming side to the Ramsey County parks system. Most are familiar with Tamarack nature center and its partnership with the school district. In the past, the parks system has been a passive parks system. Ramsey County Commissioners have designated racial equity as a county wide priority and this has become an integral part of programming and overall planning for the parks. Two years ago, Ken Pelto was brought on to focus on bringing in at risk and underserved residents into the parks. Ramsey County park programs focus more on the outdoor adventure aspects of recreation and less on sports activities.

Bryan commented that there needs to be more utilization of Parks and facilities during the winter months as it makes up a significant portion of the year.

Collaboration Ideas: 4th of July, Co-sponsor a walking event (Lakes Links Trail), Manitou days (movie night at beach/joint parks commission booth), other departments in Ramsey County that would like to use White Bear Parks or Armory (draws people to the area and non-profits receive priority),

Topic: How does each group notify the public of upcoming events?

White Bear Lakes uses the bi-annual city newspaper and the White Bear Press. Ellen offered to place Ramsey County event information in the city paper since it also benefits White Bear residents. Another idea is to copy the idea of the State Parks which made a park pass and educational materials available through the libraries in order to get people into the State Parks.

Topic: How is park planning approached what is the process?

Scott explained that there is a formalized, long and short range planning. This year, as a part of the Comprehensive Plan process, the Parks System plan is also being updated. Which includes updating many of the long and short term Master Plans of several parks.

Ellen and Bill commented that in White Bear Lake the process is more staff driven and gave details on the role the commission plays in the process. Public Works carries a rough outline that the commission reviews and gives input on the process.

Scott agreed that in the past most planning was staff driven, however, now there is a great emphasis on public engagement. Ramsey County parks is an older system so much of the focus is on re-development. Every two years the six year CIP is updated as well. Scott then went into detail on current projects affecting White Bear Lake such as the Bruce Vento Trail, Tamarack re-model (final phase) and Emerald Ash Borer Response plan.

Ellen commented on how needs change and planning needs to be updated in response to this. Scott discussed the Parks Needs Analysis that was conducted recently in preparation for the updated System Plan. The responses were very useful and highly recommends using this analysis to form the groundwork of what park components to begin looking at.

The group continued discussion on community input they have received regarding park amenities and future planning as well as the recommendations that the commissions have been enacted. Partnership with local groups, such as the White Bear Lake Lions Club (flag pole), and how that has enabled projects to be executed. Both organizations have a park bench donation programs.

Topic: Emerald Ash Borer

The county does have a basic policy on how to address. Mike Goodnature is putting together an Emerald Ash Borer Response Plan which will address policies as well as establish a management plan for areas affected as well as those that are at risk. White Bear Lake has established a partnership with both the city and for its residents with Rainbow Tree Care for diagnosis and treatment. Rainbow also did an inventory of all the ash trees to triage all those in the city.

Topic: Vandalism

Continue to design things that are resilient to vandalism. Ramsey County park staff watches daily for this as are out servicing the parks.

Bruce Vento Trail Extension and Open House Feedback: Scott Yonke

Scott gave an overview of the history of the Bruce Vento Trail. Currently, the trail stops at Burkley Road with a goal to bring it to Highway 96. The final engineering design is nearing completion for this section with a goal of shovel ready by the end of 2019. A corridor from Hwy 96 and County Road J is now being sought with a potential alignment identified by spring 2019. The public engagement meetings were to identify where the project was at and to identify the County Road J corridor. Ramsey County is also amending the 1993 Bruce Vento Regional Trail Master Plan. This will also assist in documenting any trail alignments that have happened since then. The members continued discussion on active/inactive areas of the railway, concerns related to downtown White Bear and funding time frames. All the information from the public engagement meetings is located online in the Parks Planning & Development section.

Question: Community Outreach Strategies for the Bruce Vento Regional Trail: Leah Shepard

Scott replied that the strategy was changed from mailings to press releases. Several business owners that were located along the corridors were tapped for their contacts to spread the word in the community. The city staff also assisted with website and social media blasts. So far, the online surveys have been more successful in getting feedback than the face to face meetings.

Vadnais Sports Center Dome Update: Scott Yonke

Scott commented that the County Commissioners continue work on determining the different options available for the dome. The goal is to have a direction in spring. Several factors include the accommodation of more parking as needed with the new Rush Line and the needs of the community. Ellen said the potential exists for a partnership with White Bear to create a new indoor facility as a part of the White Bear Sports Complex.

Adjournment

Bill Adjourned the Meeting at 8:19pm

**Next Meeting: Parks Administration Building
2015 Van Dyke St, Maplewood, MN
Wednesday, December 12, 2018**