

RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

January 10, 2024, 6:00 PM
2015 Van Dyke St N, Maplewood MN 55109

Commission Members In-attendance: Mary Grams Basnight, Jordan Nelson, Dr. Tamara Mattison, Mike Sachi, Linda Duck, Reier Erickson (Interim Chair)

Not In-Attendance: Gregory Williams (Chair), Brian Tempas (Vice-Chair), Snowden Herr

Guests: Eve Onduru

Staff: Mark McCabe, Liz Flinn, Ryan Ries, Angela Marlette

Mark McCabe called the meeting to order at 6:11 pm.

Reier Erickson volunteered to chair the meeting in Gregory Williams' (Chair) and Brian Tempas' (Vice-chair) absence. **A motion was made to accept the November 8, 2023, meeting minutes and approve January 10, 2024, Meeting Agenda by Mary Grams Basnight and seconded by Jordan Nelson. Motion carried.**

Arena Energy Project / Honeywell Partnership: Liz Flinn and Ryan Ries

Liz gave some background on all 11 arenas and their major user groups as well as the huge array of dry floor activities that Aldrich hosts. The TCO Fieldhouse also hosts a tot-time which has been a great hit on Thursdays. Ramsey County Sheriffs hosts a Learn to Skate and Hockey Program out of Shoreview Arena. Liz reviewed a summary of responses from the community engagement work that has been done in 2022, 2023 and 2024. The overriding response from the West Side community engagement was to continue to operate it as an ice arena but expand use during ice-out as well as to invest in signage updates. Feedback on Aldrich and Highland Arenas were that they are valued and expressed a desire to invest in upgrading locker rooms and expand opportunities for alternate type of rentals. Oscar Johnson, Shoreview, and White Bear Arenas are currently conducting community engagement with an evaluation service company called ACET. Mike Sachi asked about ice pricing in the arenas. Liz explained that seasonal schedules are made close to 6 months in advance. Parks is one of the few organizations that offers last minute ice (fire ice). Pricing is transparent and available for reviewing online at <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/parks-recreation/ice-arenas/reservations>

Ryan Ries introduced the Arena Energy Project and Honeywell Partnership. He explained that R-22 is a refrigerant chemical used to make ice. The federal government has made it illegal to manufacture R-22 due to its ozone depleting properties. While other arenas have converted to other refrigerants, Ramsey County has not yet done so and currently has a back stock that will eventually run out. Ice cooling systems are closed meaning that R-22 is not needed unless there is a leak in the system. Ryan reminded the group of the June 2023, meeting on the Energy Action Plan and how the arenas represent the area of greatest savings in energy reduction and environmentally sustainable solutions. This partnership with Honeywell is part of a Guaranteed Energy Savings Program. These programs use the future cost savings to pay for the upgrades and incentivize use. The Inflation Reduction Act allows for tax exempt organizations, such as Ramsey County, to realize these savings by working with Honeywell. Currently, Parks is showing payback within 20 years to be feasible.

Other details:

- Some alternatives are ammonia and CO2, but those have high infrastructure cost and compatibility issues. Arena compressors were replaced 10 – 15 years ago and are compatible with ammonia. Another option are drop-in refrigerant systems which may be more applicable to the smaller arenas. Parks is also looking to install solar panels at TCO Fieldhouse, which was built to use solar energy systems. Other items that need evaluating for energy saving are the building envelope (insulation), using led lighting and heating ejection systems that repurpose heat for spectators.

- How it works: There are 2 Phases. Next week the Honeywell team will examine the facilities and determine what is feasible. Mary asked about if there are risks with ammonia. Ryan said that yes there are risks and to mitigate some of this at Aldrich, the ice plant (houses ammonia) would be moved outside of the facility and there are alarms for leak detection. Ammonia is also specifically regulated by municipalities.
- Mark gave some history on the lack of success Parks has had over the years in obtaining funds needed for refrigerant conversion. Honeywell has estimated an overall 20-30% energy reduction. While there have been a number of energy audits already completed showing some low hanging fruit such as LED replacement however those still also have a 20-year payback.
- Mike asked how long Honeywell will take to complete the feasibility study? Ryan anticipates a more concrete estimate by May 2024. Liz will be meeting next week with the Honeywell marketing team to be able to articulate what Ramsey County goals are to the youth hockey associations.
- The consensus of Park Commission Members was that this a worthwhile endeavor and approved moving forward. It is planned for the Parks Commission to receive regular updates.

Election of Commission Chair and Vice Chair: Both Greg and Brian expressed their acceptance of continuing their respective roles via group text to the Parks Commission before the meeting. Reier asked the group for any other nominations and seeing none, elections were closed. **Dr. Tamara Mattison nominated Gregory Williams as Chair for 2024 and Brian Tempas as Vice-chair for 2024, it was seconded by Mary Grams Basnight. All approved and motion carried.**

Annual Review and Approval of Commission Bylaws:

Mary Grams Basnight motioned to accept the By-Laws and was seconded by Jordan Nelson, all approved and motion carried.

Commission Chair Update: Reier noted that Greg's update was emailed to the group just before the meeting.

Commission Member Update: None

Director Update: Mark appreciates the Parks Commission feedback and engagement as it helps to make a stronger plan moving forward. A few news stories are that the warm Minnesota winter is negatively impacting programming and snow making with Cross Country Ski events being cancelled. Parks will still proceed to offer a number of dates for Free Try to Ski programs which are possible because of an equity grant. Parks continues to work with schools that do not have Cross Country Ski programs and grow interest and skill. There was a news piece on WCCO show casing that the County Manager announced on March 1st he is leaving to lead the Metropolitan Council. The Interim County Manager will be Johanna Berg.

Reier Erickson motioned for adjournment at 7:26 pm

Next Meeting: February 14, 2024