

RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

March 10, 2021 – 6:00 PM
VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

Commission Members in Attendance: Chairperson: Leah Shepard (AL), Michael Berger (AL), Jordan Nelson (2), Brian Tempas (3), Metric Giles (4), Bryan Shirley (5), Melissa Wenzel (6)

Staff in Attendance: Kristopher Lencowski, Mee Cheng, Angela Marlette

Not in Attendance: Candy Petersen (7)

Community Members: Seitu, Dr. Tamara Mattison, Kamairia Washington

Call Meeting to Order: Chairperson Leah Shepard called the meeting to order at 6:03pm. All attendees introduced themselves and outlined their involvement with Ramsey County Parks and Recreation.

Approve February 10, 2021 Minutes and March 10, 2021 Agenda

Mike Berger motioned for approval of the February 10, 2021 Meeting minutes, Jordan Nelson seconded, motion carried. Jordan Nelson motioned to approve the March 10, 2021 meeting agenda, Brian Tempas seconded, motion carried.

Racial Equity Topic: Racial Equity in Procurement and Contracting in Ramsey County, Mee Cheng:

Kris Lencowski gave background into the Parks racial equity work including the Racial Equity Work Plan and other work with other County departments such as Mee's department in Policy and Planning and with the Equity Action Circle.

A summary of current equity work is:

- County Board workshop presented on the 21st Century Parks
<https://ramseycountymn.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>
- West Side Arena Development project
- Park Ordinance Update and Community Engagement
- Park Transportation Connections: Mapping and Bus Integration
- Diversity in Advisory Groups and Commissions: Parks and Public Health collaboration with the County Managers Office
- Parks contracted with LCP Tracker and PM Web to track use of Small Business, Women and Minority owned businesses.

Mee Cheng discussed the current county-wide focus to connect with community first before a project begins, to determine the scope, define level of engagement needed (Consult, inform...), determine who to connect with and what engagement strategies to use. In relation to procurement and contracting, Mee discussed:

- **Master contract selection process:** Ramsey County cannot select a contractor or consultant by race or ethnicity due to the Counties Race and Gender-Neutral Program. State statute says that if there is a race-based goal it must be backed up by a disparity study. Ramsey County did not participate in the 2017 Joint disparity study.
 - What is being done is targeted outreach strategies to BIPOC businesses to encourage and assist these businesses to apply

- Master contract scope is very broad to encourage applicants and Countywide use
 - Currently there are 24 vendors with increased diversity
 - Proposal are evaluated across the Ramsey County Service teams with criteria focusing on meaningful, inclusive community engagement with underrepresented communities as well as their professional qualifications, project tracking and cost value
 - The County evaluation group is comprised of ethnically diverse staff from many areas of the county to bring more views to the table

Discussion: *Metric Giles would like to know what those findings from the disparity study were. Metric raised concern regarding the lack of an official qualitative standard for Ramsey County and cited examples of incongruency regarding the hiring/contracting of a vendor whose racial/sexual background if different than those being targeted for engagement.*

- **21st Century Parks Community Engagement:** Connected with culturally/ethnically diverse community groups with a trusted partner to assist those groups in hosting virtual listening sessions. Using community engagement funds to support this. Community groups participating represent Hmong, Karen, Black, youth and those with disabilities in community. Working on a connection with American Indian community as well.

- Connecting with current users and staff with surveys and staff sessions as well

Discussion: *Metric questioned if the verbiage of “Master Plan” will be changed and Melissa Wenzel also commented that it is being phased out. Brian Tempas asked if the Latino community is being engaged. Brian also asked if it is possible to do a disparity study.*

Mee replied that the cost is substantial, Ramsey County did consult with Keen consulting in the absence of a study what can be done that will not violate state statue. They provided items that can be done, and Mee will send those recommendation as a follow-up as well as the 2017 Disparity Study. Prep work for the next Disparity study is being done.

Bruce Vento Regional Trail Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment: Scott Yonke

Scott reviewed the Amendment and how it specifically addresses the long-term trail improvements from Larpenteur Avenue to County Road J. This plan is required to use Metropolitan Council Park and Trail Policy plan in its formation and includes:

- Boundaries and acquisition costs
- Demand forecast
- Development concept
- Conflicts
- Public services
- Operations
- Public engagement and participation: Engagement period spanned 2014-2020
- Equity Analysis
- Accessibility

Ramsey County is asking for Parks Commission support of the Master Plan Amendment. Next steps are request for County Board approval in April and submission to the Metropolitan Council in May/June 2021.

Discussion: *Leah hopes to hear from community member Seitu at the next meeting since he has some valuable resources about connecting with Black biking communities. Leah questioned if there is information about whom uses the trails and whom would benefit. While the Metropolitan council does most these counts and studies the community engagement also heard from those that would use the trail and benefit. Communities that use the Rush-line Corridor for transportation will benefit greatly as well as all trail users since they now have access to a connecting segment.*

Metric asked if Scott had an understanding of the application process between informed, educated qualitative engagement process versus uniformed, superficial quantitative engagement process. Perhaps there is an education piece missing. Scott replied that there is much more information present in the actual Master Plan Amendment than the high-level review done at this meeting, with that in mind, there is still more work needing to be done in the process to gather more data as it relates to age, income level, disabilities and not just rely on the Metropolitan Council figures. Scott replied that he does understand what it means to have an informed, educated qualitative process and that the community was connected with and the input from them had drove the development of this master plan amendment. Mike asked Metric to clarify what he is looking for more specifically. There is a need to build those qualitative connections so that a group that has never been asked their opinion will understand how to respond and truly share their needs.

A motion was made by Metric to table to support for the Bruce Vento Master Plan until more engaged qualitative input. No Second, discussion continued.

Scott confirmed that this is time sensitive and could wait for another month but deconstructing the Master Plan would prevent moving forward toward seeking funding for the project, especially since it was made in conjunction with the Rush-line project.

Leah pointed out the Commission needs to figure out how to reconcile these past processes with current knowledge and where to draw the line on projects that have been in works. Generally, a letter of support has meant that the Commission agrees with everything in the plan. The last time the Commission heard of this plan was in 2018 and many members have joined since that time. Ideally, the Commission would have been looped in earlier to prevent this time crunch and gap.

A motion was made by Metric to send a letter of concern to the Board in lieu of a letter of support, Mike seconded, discussion continued.** Melissa pointed out that a Master plan is really just a symbolic start and that she thinks that this type of engagement has been done, just poorly documented. Melissa suggested offering a letter of support that outlines these conditions, which make them acknowledged publicly but still allows the project to continue on and move towards addressing the concerns. Kris confirmed that the Master plan is not the end of the line but each step towards implementation will have new engagement. **Metric withdrew motion, Mike agreed as well. Discussion continued.** Scott asked for specifics regarding what information the Commission would like to see with a potential delay of 1 month so that Planning can understand the parameters of what the commission is looking for to be included in their ask. Scott informed the Commission that the Master Plan Amendment is complete and going back and redoing public engagement is unlikely, however some sections of the document can be improved but insight is needed from the Parks Commission. **Melissa made a motion to move forward with support with an addendum that reflects the Parks Commission concerns. Jordan Nelson seconded the motion. Motion carries. 4 in favor, 2 opposed.

2021 Work Plan Updates & Park Ordinance Update: ***Melissa made a motion to table these items to the April meeting, Jordan seconded. Motion carries.***

Director Updates: Thank you for the robust conversation and being partners in equity and parks work.

Commission Member Updates: Goal for motion to be done next Wednesday, March 17th, 2021.

*A motion for adjournment was made by Jordan Nelson, **meeting adjourned at 8:34pm***

Next Meeting: April 14, 2021

