



RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

March 13, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Parks & Recreation Department: 2015 Van Dyke Street, Maplewood, Mn 55109

Attendees: Jessica Pitzel (1), Gale Pederson (2), Melissa Wenzel (6), Mark Erickson (AL), Leah Shepard (AL), Mark McCabe, Angie Marlette, Scott Yonke, Mike Goodnature, Lidiya Girma and Mee Cheng
Not in Attendance: Metric Giles (4), Candy Petersen (7), Brian Tempas (3) Bryan Shirley (5)

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 pm by Leah Shepard.

All Attendees gave a brief introduction.

Approval of Agenda:

Gale Peterson motioned for approval of the March 13, 2019 agenda and Mark Erickson seconded. All Approved. *Motion carried.*

Approval of the Minutes:

Melissa Wenzel motioned to accept the February 13, 2019 meeting minutes and Mark Erickson seconded. All Approved. *Motion carried.*

State of The Parks Presentation Update:

Mark McCabe summarized the purpose and key topics within the State of the Parks report and its presentation to the Board of Commissioners. This is an opportunity to show what the commission is proud of and areas of focus.

- Aldrich Arena dry floor events increased community use: Hmong New Year and Quinceaneras
- Program partnerships such as PINE
- Racial Equity diversification with Lifeguard Staff
- Updates on Planning and Development: Lake Owasso Net Zero energy facility

The Draft presentation will be presented to the commission and then presented at the April 16, 2019 Board Meeting, Tuesday at 9:00am at the County Courthouse. All Commission Members are invited to attend.

Ramsey County Advisory Groups Study:

Lidiya Girma and Mee Cheng are working on a county wide project on how the county can better engage with community members that are appointed to advisory committees. In addition, they are gathering information on experiences from those on these committees. All this feedback will be collated into themes and shared back to the committees in mid-May. This piggybacks off the demographics survey that was done earlier in the year. A board workshop is anticipated in the summer to address the findings as well as establish the vision leadership has for these groups.

Angie Marlette will send a commission roster with names and tenure for the survey. Mee Cheng began reviewing the seven questions that were handed out. Questions ranged from positive experiences,



impacts that the members have seen as part of their participation to how Ramsey County can improve the ways these groups are engaged with. The members answered and engaged in discussion on these questions. The members would like to see more information explaining the Parks Commission online to assist with those interested in applying. Mee Cheng encouraged a direct email for any further questions and comments.

Planning Division Update:

Scott Yonke is working on criteria for County Park Master Plans. Regional Park Master Plans have criteria through the Met council but not county parks. These county park master plans have not been reviewed since the last System Plan.

Rice Creek North Regional Trail Master Plan: Started last summer as an amendment to the 2013 Plan. This plan addressed only a narrow strip, the park trail needs to be looked at as a whole with the additional scope of recreation opportunities. A 30-day public review was completed in February 2019. The plan is now being worked on that addresses the MET council criteria and will be sent to the Commission for review in time for the April meeting. After this another 30-day public review of the document can be launched. Meanwhile, the cities will also have time to review the document and gain approval. *Jessica Pitzel asked if comments generated during public review often cause changes to the documents?* It seems to depend on the project. Sometimes there is a huge amount of community response and sometimes there is very little. *Mark Erikson asked about the different opportunities in which the community can comment.* Scott summarized that there are engagement meetings that review physical plans as well as commentary times in both the planning and final documentation phases. A smaller Master Plan can take eight months to a year to complete, many are longer.

Battle Creek Regional Park Master Plan Update: This master plan was done in 1981 and needs major updating. The process begins in March of this year. SRF Consultant group has been hired to lead the community engagement process while the County does the writing and graphics work. The draft is expected for November of 2020. There will two rounds of community engagement meeting as well two rounds of design charettes for the public to draw ideas out. There will also be a study into Battle Creek Water Works.

Scott asked how the commission wants to be engaged in the Master Planning Process?

- Project goal formation
- Public improvement
- Graphic Plan
- Writing of the Plan

Scott suggested to have a first look at the Rice Creek North Master Plan and decide.

Melissa suggested that the commission is notified at least a week ahead on community engagement events to connect with their communities and encourage involvement.



Lexington Regional Trail Master Plan Update: Will be done completely in-house. A Master Plan has not been done on this area as it was designated as a regional corridor. The Ramsey County section is from County Road J down to Larpenteur, with the City of St. Paul doing South of Larpenteur. Summer of 2020 is the time frame for the draft plan to be completed. The Lexington Trail is unique in that it provides long distance routes that connect to other regional trails and will become a popular north/south route on this side of the cities. Potential exists to include Lake Josephine, Island Lake and Marsden Archery Range into this trail and thus into the Regional trail system.

Upon Leah's request, Angie will secure a copy of the MET Council 2040 Thrive for the Commission to review.

2019 Deer Management Plan Approval, Winter Sharp Shooting Update, 2018 Conservation Corp Annual Review:

Mike Goodnature commented on the amazing ecological diversity that exists in Ramsey County parks system and that he has the privilege of determining which restoration projects to implement and oversees the protection of these natural resources. While Ramsey County is smallest most densely populated county in Minnesota, there are over 6,000 acres of park land, more than Dakota County. The Deer management program began in 1999 and continued each year since. The cities look to this program on making decisions on deer management. Mike reviewed the 2019 Deer Management Plan and the different tools used such as archery and sharpshooting. The use of these tools depends on the location and density of the herds. Mike delineates the deer habitat and the density of deer there and follows the DNR recommendation of 15-20 deer per square mile of habitat. Currently there are 15-20 times the amount of that carrying capacity. This is unhealthy for the deer population and poses a safety risk to residents. Mike is seeking approval on holding hunts in 9 County Parks and potential to do more removal in the Highwood Avenue area following archery hunts, if needed. The archers are allowed to take the deer they harvest and those from the USDA sharpshooting are donated to a charity through the DNR Conservation officer so that nothing goes to waste. Other control methods have been reviewed and they were found less effective, very costly and more stressful to the herds.

Gale Pederson moved to accept the 2019 Deer Management Program and submit to the County Board, Jessica Pitzel seconded, Melissa abstained. All Approved. *Motion carried.*

This will be the fifth year that Ramsey County will host a Conservation Corp Crew through Ameri-Corp called Youth Outdoors. They educate high school youth and work alongside them on outdoor projects that Parks designate. They gain great leadership and environmental experiences. The report was emailed to the Commission for review prior to this meeting.

Director's Report:

Mark McCabe reported that the snowy month has been good for cross country skiing and the inaugural session of the Winter Recreation Area held at Keller Regional Park. There were over 200 diverse participants. Thank you to Ken Pelto for trying something new and the crews that maintained the trails and parking lot.



Mark has been doing legislature work on the Battle Creek Winter Recreation Area. This season there was only one cross country ski meet that was able to be hosted due to lack of snow. The season begins in November and the snow did not arrive until February. There is a lot of enthusiasm from interested user groups and Parks is assisting. The family of gold medalist Jessie Diggins has written letters of support and Parks is exploring naming a trail after her, Jessie Diggins Gold Trail.

Finally, Mark updated that the County Commissioners want to build a more permanent Indoor turf facility to replace the Vadnais Sports Dome. Ideally, there would be a community investment of \$1M with the exploration of selling naming rights to assist in funding.

Report from The Chair & Other Commission Members:

Melissa asked for an update regarding a letter from the Commission regarding the Battle Creek pedestrian safety issue. Mark suggested an email exchange, including Bryan Shirley for review and then send it to the Commission members for review.

Gale wanted to Thank Mark McCabe and Angie for attending the MRPA luncheon and award ceremony.

Adjournment:

7:56 Leah motioned for adjournment.

Next Meeting: May 8, 2019
Parks & Recreation Administration Building