

**RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 6:00 PM

Parks Administrative Building

2015 Van Dyke Street in Maplewood Minnesota

**Commission Members in attendance:** Chair - Gregory Williams, Leah Shepard, Mary Grams Basnight, Jordan Nelson, Dr. Tamara Mattison, Candy Petersen

**Staff:** Ken Pelto, Thony Thao, Kris Lencowski, Scott Yonke, Brett (Gus) Blumer, Mark McCabe, Angela Marlette

**Guests:** Amy Gage: Friends of the Parks and Amy Wazlawik: Commissioner Frethem's Principal Assistant

Chair Gregory Williams called the meeting to order at 6:04pm. **A motion to accept the April 12, 2023, meeting minutes and approve the May 10, 2023, meeting agenda was made by Candy Petersen and seconded by Dr. Tamara Mattison. Motion carried.**

**Introduction of Guests:** Amy Gage is the current Director of the Friends of the Parks and Trails organization that helped launch the creation of the Ramsey County Parks Commissions. They are relatively, new founded in 1985. Amy invited everyone to the annual meeting June 14<sup>th</sup> but recognizes it's on the same night as the Parks Commission meeting. Amy Wazlawik is Commissioner Frethem's Principal Assistant and here to observe. The group proceeded to do introductions.

**Planning & Development: Ramsey County Play Areas**

Scott Yonke presented a system overview, background, national trends and current projects regarding play areas in Ramsey County parks. The goal of this presentation was to assemble an engagement strategy with the assistance of the Parks Commission. Brett Blumer "Gus" attended the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) conference sessions covering playground topics to help keep up with the newest information regarding play design and principles. Gus then introduced the *7 Principals of Inclusive Playground Design* <https://secure.viewer.zmagz.com/publication/9854a42b#/9854a42b/4> This was created by PLAYCORE who teamed up with Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State to understand play areas and how they can address the five areas of child development; social-emotional, physical, cognitive, Communication and Sensory. From this study the 7 Principles were developed to create meaningful play environments for people of all Ages and abilities: Be Fair, Be Included, Be Smart, Be Independent, Be Safe, Be Active, Be Comfortable.

Questions that the Commission Members discussed are below:

- If you were a Park User, what questions would allow you to feel like you have a voice in future play area development/redevelopment?
- What outcomes in play area development can the public change or inform?
- How do we frame questions so that they have an equitable lens?
  - Next Steps: Pull questions together for June through July for data collection, August assemble and weigh against playground analysis and then start working with design. With the project being ready spring 2024.

**Parks Updates:** Kris Lencowski started the update:

- Winter Rec Recap: Kris summarized the project background, what amenities were created and funding sources. The Winter recreation area was opened in November 2022. The Ski community has been

asking for snowmaking for over 10 years to be able to have reliable snow. Prior to construction, there were 11 formal community engagement sessions in community and with potential users.

- Thony Thao handled the customer service aspect in the winter recreation area. There were two park service coordinators. New wayfinding signage was created to assist all levels of skiing expertise.
- Ken Pelto reviewed the successful inaugural school programming and promising interest for next season.
- Greg called Fat Tire Biking a gateway winter activity to get people active and out in the winter as well as to get people interested in other activities. Mary Grams Basnight asked about what lessons were learned and what Parks would change.
- Discussion question explored was, how do we continue to engage communities of color?
  - Greg commented that special events draw people in and the Loppet has great ideas and examples.
  - He also suggested an end of the season bonus or incentive for seasonal staff to encourage retention.
- Reminder: Welcoming Art Sign Celebration: June 3<sup>rd</sup> from 1-3 at Keller

**Commission Chair Update:** Greg shared a link and video used to raise awareness of Fat Tire Biking benefits.

**Director Update:** Mark McCabe reported that several things are moving forward in the Legislature and that session closes in 2 weeks. The golf courses are all open however not as early as in 2022.

**A motion to adjourn was made by Candy at 8:10pm**

**Next Meeting:** June 14, 2023