

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

JUNE 8th, 2022, 6:00pm

Parks Administrative Building

2015 Van Dyke Street in Maplewood Minnesota

**Commission Members in Attendance:** Chair - Gregory Williams (AL), Leah Shepard (AL), Michael Berger (1), Jordan Nelson (2), Brian Tempas (3), *Metric Giles (4) via Zoom*, Savannah Lane (5), Snowdon Herr (6)

**Not in Attendance:** Candy Petersen (7)

**Others in Attendance:** Mark McCabe, Sovatha Oum, Kristopher Lencowski, Kenneth Pelto, Liz Flinn, Angela Marlette

*The meeting was called to order by Chair, Greg Williams at 6:04pm. Savannah Lane motioned to approve the April 13, 2022, Meeting Minutes and to accept the June 8, 2022, Agenda; Jordan Nelson seconded, **Motion carried.***

**Hiring Update and Introduction of Tamarack Nature Center Outdoor Education Manager: Sovatha Oum**

Kristopher Lencowski welcomed Sovatha to the meeting. Sovatha shared his background coming from Cambodia, his family's journey to the United States and the unique experiences that lead to a career in serving minority and disadvantaged youths. He has worked with Big Brother Big Sister, Outward Bound and most recently came to Parks from Camp St. Croix. The position at Tamarack Nature Center fits with his passion in promoting equitable access to the outdoors. The educators at the nature center are passionate, driven and talented he feels lucky to have inherited this strong team and has begun to establish relationships that can forward equitable access across Ramsey County. Mark McCabe thanked Sovatha for sharing his story and also welcomed him to Parks.

**Advisory Body Members Compensation Opt-in Form/Appointment Update:** Mark McCabe, Director Parks & Recreation

- **Compensation info:** The opt-in link will be resent for those that still would like to claim the compensation of a \$25 gift card per meeting. Compensation is based on attendance from January of 2022 thru May 2022. The Chief Clerks office will send a survey at the end of the year to all Commission members to review the program.
- **Appointment Update:** After the conversation with County Commissioners from the advisory board workshop on May 17th, appointments for the parks and recreation commission will be delayed:
  - There will be a new and consistent timeline for recruiting, opening, and closing applications
  - Commissioners will be having lightning round interviews with each applicant
    - The interviews are not scheduled yet – that is why appointments are postponed
  - The County Board is aiming for July 12 for appointmentsMetric Giles is welcome to continue to serve until the new appointment takes place and Jordan will be contacted shortly for an interview since that term is ending.

**Signage Project Update: Welcoming Art:** Kris Lencowski, Director Parks & Trails

Kris gave a brief background of the ongoing signage project and gave a presentation of the Welcoming Art project that highlights local artist's work at several different locations. A Summary of the project can be found online: <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/parks-recreation/21st-century-parks-initiative/parks-recreation-signage-project>

In partnership with Ramsey County Communications department, these 40 inches by 4 foot panels will be displayed at the top of the new park signage.

Leah Shepard asked about the wayfinding numbers located on the map and if they were trail markers. She also wanted to ensure that the colors used were reviewed for accessibility. Kris confirmed the trail markers and that the colors were reviewed by communications to meet accessibility standards.

**Summer Programming Updates:** Ken Peltó, Program Specialist

Ken is looking forward to utilizing the lower mesh section on the new park's signage for programming as it's always been a challenge to find a consistent, permanent locations people can go for this programming information. Ken reviewed the types of programming done in the parks ranging from free drop-in programming, events with community partners and bigger programs that draw in those not usually in the Parks. One such collaboration was with MN Public Health called S.H.I.P (Statewide Health Improvement Partnership)

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/ship/> in which Parks received a grant for a complete Bike fleet for all ages and abilities. Parks had made these bikes available at times throughout the park system.

Ken reviewed past winter events and collaborations with the libraries will ensure that upcoming information is emailed to Park Commission members. Ken requested that if Parks Commission are aware of other events to reach out and see if Parks can assist with programming.

Greg commented on having a more effective way to communicate programming other than the website, especially with Winter recreation coming online. Ken agreed and is working with Parks' new communications associate on using local newspapers as well as ensuring that organizations that Parks work with already, for example with Thony Thao, are also utilized

Ken is also glad to report that Parks also had two diverse seasonal associates that have been doing programming and will be back in the winter to continue this work.

**Golf and Arenas Update:** Liz Flinn, Director Golf Courses & Arenas

Being just two months into the position, Liz has taken the time to visit almost all the Youth Hockey groups regarding their arena experience.

**Golf Updates:**

- Opened 3-4 weeks later due to extended winter season
- Island Lake is opening the mini golf course
- Manitou Ridge annually host a three-day memorial tournament for General Lang Pao a Hmong American community in the United States and major general in the Royal Lao Army.

**Arenas:**

- Grown community partnerships with three practice arenas
  - Oscar Johnson Arena: Roseville Girls Hockey doing workouts and agility work on the dry floor and Elements Gym is a nonprofit that does summer youth work and needed unobstructed space for youth camps at the arena.
  - White Bear Lake Arena: YMCA now uses the dry floor almost daily through the summer for children's programming.
  - Phalen Arena: Johnson High school temporarily moved their weight room into the arena while construction work is happening.
  - Highland Arena: hosted the Brownbody production of "Tracing Sacred Steps" unique, audience involved ice skating production, hope to expand this relationship. <https://brownbody.org/>

**Community engagements updates.**

- Westside: completed phase 1 and a Draft compilation with recommendations is coming soon
  - High level results indicate community would like it to stay an ice area but with more opportunity for community use.
  - Phase 2 will focus on visiting with neighborhood partners and programming capacity.

- Aldrich/Highland Community Engagement: what amenities and improvements need to be made with both user groups and community while the refrigeration upgrade is being looked at the same time.
  - Focus groups to happen over the summer months with the goal of a summer wrap up.

The opportunities at Oscar Johnson came about because reception staff were aware of the engagement at Westside regarding expanded use.

Leah asked for some background on the new consultant group. The scope of this work was sent out with groups that already have a master contract with Ramsey County. The new consulting group is called ACET inc. <https://www.acetinc.com/> and have previous positive experiences working with Ramsey County.

### **Equity Topic: Land Acknowledgement Discussion: Mark McCabe**

#### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

Read at the opening of each Ramsey County Board Meeting

*Every community owes its existence and vitality to generations from around the world who contributed their hopes, dreams, and energy to making the history that led to this moment. Some were brought here against their will, some were drawn to leave their distant homes in hope of a better life, and some have lived on this land since time immemorial. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference.*

*We are standing on the ancestral lands of the Dakota People. We want to acknowledge the Ojibwe, the Ho Chunk and the other nations of people who also called this place home. We pay respects to their elders past and present. Please take a moment to consider the treaties made by the tribal nations that entitle non-Native people to live and work on traditional Native lands. Consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today. And please join us in uncovering such truths at any and all public events.*

The County Board reads this statement at the beginning of each meeting and that some advisory groups have adopted this practice. It was not resolved if the Parks Commission would also like to establish this practice. There was previous concern from the commission on the purpose and intention behind reading the statement. Mark updated that there have been legislators asking about pursuing posting the equivalent indigenous name for parks such as Long Lake Regional Park. Greg was impressed that this is used to start the County Board meetings and knows that the building is on sacred land.

Leah is curious as to why the statement is in the past tense and who wrote and contributed to the statement. Metric is asking if there are any documented quarterly reports on how equity is advancing in parks work? Mark commented that Parks and all Ramsey County is currently assembling the annual updated performance measures which tie to criteria on equity measures. Those can be shared once the report is finalized. Metric questioned if this is department specific? Every department does report out on their own performance and the different departments can be compared in their progress. The work force diversity of the contractors hired, and the diversity of businesses worked runs through procurement, but systems that have established that make it easier to work more with these businesses. The county now intentionally seeks out these businesses to add them to the certified list.

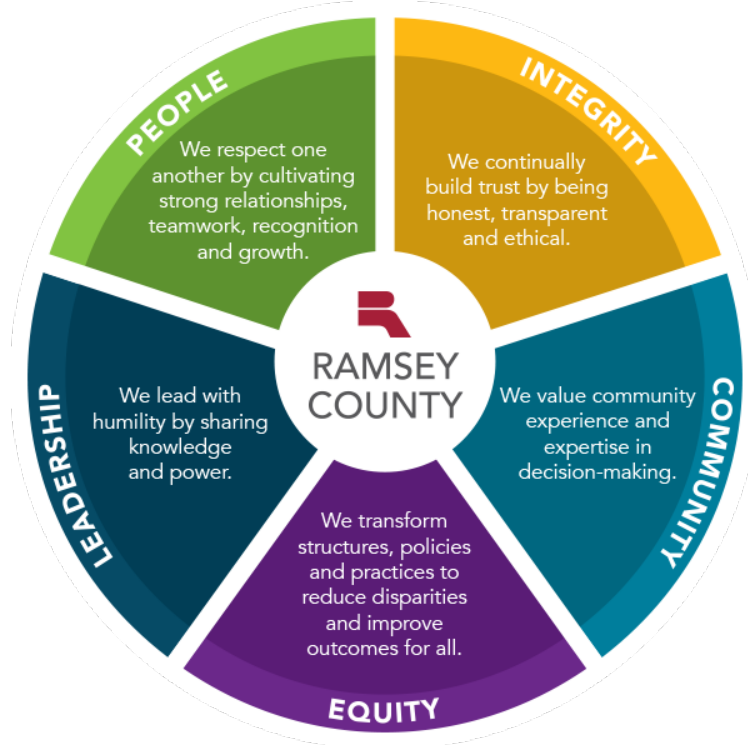
Savannah Lane having data on how the county is taking action to make change is important and reading a statement does not constitute actionable change in *uncovering such truths*. Savannah suggested that having a standing agenda item for this topic would be worthwhile in creating meaning behind regular reading of the statement. Leah agrees with reading the statement but agrees that there needs to be action behind it. Jordan Nelson suggested that Ingenious peoples need to also be brought into Parks processes as well. Mark reported that the meetings with indigenous groups at the county level are beginning to meet again and can offer as a resource.

### **Commission Chair Update: Gregory Williams**

Greg met with Thony Thao on barriers to park use with non-park users and finding connections with community groups for feedback. Reading the NPRA has a community engagement resource guide, which has some great

information. A sustainable engagement process was created for Carver County created a great framework for outreach into the community. The MET council 2020 document has data collected across the metro area with a 17-page executive summary. Greg then read a portion regarding the importance of outdoor recreational needs and preferences of teens to be a focus. Also met with Liz Flinn and discussed future programming opportunities at the TCO fieldhouse. Leah requested links to both documents.

Metric asked if Ramsey County or Parks specifically have an equity statement? And has there been a follow-up regarding Parks Commission attending equity training so that the Parks Commission is in alignment with what the County? Ramsey County does have an equity statement as a county value and it reads, "We transform structures, policies and practices to reduce disparities and improve outcomes for all."



Greg recalls equity training during his time as an employee with the county. Metric feels that the parks commission has done nothing to reach a level of continuity regarding equity and the solution would be taking some type of awareness education. Leah agreed that the parks commission does not have a shared equity perspective/view and training has been requested in the past. Mark will continue to work with Antonio Montez, part of the diversity and inclusion team, and work to gain some training.

**Commission Member Update:** none

**Director Update:**

Mark appreciates being able to see people in person. No meeting scheduled for July and the next meeting will be the August Parks Tour, please watch for location details.

*A motion for adjournment was made by Greg Williams, meeting adjourned at 7:59pm*

**Next Meeting:** August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Parks Tour