

## RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

September 8, 2021 – 6:00 PM  
VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

**Commission Members In-Attendance:** Chair: Leah Shepard (AL), Gregory Williams (AL), Michael Berger (1), Vicechair: Jordan Nelson (2), Brian Tempas (3), Metric Giles (4), Savannah Lane (5), Snowdon Herr (6), Candy Petersen (7)

**Ramsey County Parks Staff in Attendance:** Mark McCabe, Lisa Hanson Lamey, Kenneth Pelto, Solomon Tsega, Angela Marlette

Leah Shepard stated that, “Due to the ongoing health pandemic, particularly because of the delta variant, as Chair of the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation Commission, I have determined that an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent. In compliance with Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.021, subdivision 1, as the Commission meets via Zoom, we state for the record that all members of the Commission are able to hear one another and all discussion and testimony, as can members of the public. Also, because of the ongoing health pandemic, it is unfeasible for at least one Commission member, chief legal counsel, or County staff to be physically present in the regular meeting room. All votes by Commission members will be conducted by roll call.”

*The meeting was called to order by Chair Leah Shepard at 6:03pm. Jordan Nelson motioned to approve June 9, 2021 minutes and September 8, 2021 agenda; Savannah Lane seconded. Roll was called and all approved. **Motion carried.***

### **Racial Equity Topic: Right Track Plus Worker Program Update**

Ken Pelto, Program Specialist introduced the Right Track Plus Program, which is a new, collaborative internship program developed with the city of St. Paul for unemployed and under-employed workers aged 18-24 years which have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Wages are paid by Federal stimulus money and each intern also has a non-profit sponsor/job coach. The internship is for 20 hours a week and runs for 15 weeks, ending in Mid-November.

In addition to the 20 hours, workers are offered professional job coaching, career counseling and transportation assistance.

- Approximate 200 Participants with locations in agencies across St. Paul
- Parks & Recreation is training 6 interns across 5 areas
- On October 7, 2021 Parks is hosting an in-person tour for 25 additional interns placed in the program
- On October 26, 2021 Tamarack Nature Center will also sponsor an in-person tour
- Lisa Hanson Lamey relayed how positive the arenas intern experience has been

Q&A: *Metric Giles asked if Parks is seeing results, is Parks maintaining data on demographics and how Parks is furthering intern’s educational advancement.* Parks is seeing good progress with interns and the overall program would compile that ongoing data. Mark commented that this program is one method that will lead to success in increasing workforce diversity in Ramsey County Parks. Ken

added more background info on the program that addresses those questions. *Brian Tempas applauded the diversity of the Parks interns and opportunity that is being offered to the candidates. Leah asked if what type of county follow up will there be for job openings that apply to the intern's area. We are not aware of a list serve being created yet.*

#### **Interlude - Introduction of Solomon Tsega:**

Mark introduced Solomon as Parks & Recreations new Facilities Coordinator with the Planning Division. Solomon shared his educational and personal background and the Commission welcomed him to Ramsey County Parks & Recreation.

#### **Closure of the Ponds at Battle Creek:**

Lisa Hanson Lamey, Director of Operations for Golf Courses and Areas reviewed the courses' closure.

- Decision to close the Ponds at Battle Creek was made in 2019 Budget, with the last day of operations being Sunday, September 12<sup>th</sup>
- Large Capital improvement for other courses feasibility being determined
- Ramsey County has partnered with the City of Maplewood to determine what should happen with the properties with 3 rounds of community engagement done and presented
  - Ramsey County Board has opened up development request proposals through August 4<sup>th</sup> and posted online at the Ramsey County site
  - <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/projects-initiatives/economic-development-initiatives/maplewood-properties-site-planning>
  - City is focused on the current housing crisis and has the land use authority
- Staff continue to work on the redistribution of assets, the maintenance facility will remain within Parks use for storage and Winter Recreation maintenance usage

#### **West Side Arena Project Update:**

Lisa Hanson Lamey gave a brief presentation recapping the West Side Recreational Project history and how the project aligns with current 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parks Mission.

- Lisa reviewed in detail the three alternatives that will be brought to the community through two rounds of engagement to determine the types of uses the community would do in this space
- Those responses will be reviewed and brought to the County Board for direction on which two alternatives to continue exploring with Community.
- First round of engagement is planned to be completed by the end of 2021
  - The second round of engagement estimated to begin early part of 2022

*Q&A: Gregory Williams asked if a new structure like a Turf facility is being considered. Lisa pointed out that the third option does resemble that, however it all depends on what the community says is most needed and activates that are desired in the facility. Mike Berger asked about current ice usage at the facility. There are 15 to 20 groups that use the ice utilizing 85-90% of available time during the ice season. Leah suggested a community engagement event during the Día de Los Muertos celebration.*

#### **State of the Parks Annual Presentation:**

Mark McCabe reviewed that the Parks Commission by-laws establish that an Annual State of the Parks presentation is to be made to the County Board by the Parks Commission Chair. Because of

the pandemic, nothing was presented in 2020. This presentation is made to the County Board during their weekly meetings.

Potential Topics:

- Impact of Covid19 restrictions on facilities
- TCO Sports Garden naming rights and the development of these partnerships in creating revenue
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Parks work, specifically West Side Arena, Parks System survey and Park Ordinance project
- Soil & Water Division work, being still relatively new to Parks, its important to highlight their work to the County Board
- Natural resource stewardship work
- Diversification of Parks staff, Internship programs and integrating equity into all Parks work
- Key projects from the planning team such as updated Park master plans and capital improvement plans, such as the Battle Creek Winter Rec area and future programs there that reduce barriers in learning to ski

Mark will send a more polished agenda for review before board presentation.

*Q&A: Greg asked for the link to be able to live stream and reminder when the meeting occurs.*

Website with link to meetings both past and live stream:

<https://ramseycountymn.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

#### **Commission Member Update:**

**Gregory** updated the Commission on recent activities including meeting with John Richter, the president of Endurance United to discuss future planning and enhanced community outreach. He also will participate in the Design build project team for Battle Creek Winter recreation area. Gregory would also encourage Parks to consider involvement in St. Paul Winter carnival activities as a source of community engagement. He would like to meet with representatives to cultivate interest in arranging this. Mark will follow-up with Leah on this great idea.

**Candy Petersen** asked for clarification of a rumor that Ramsey County is leaving the golf business. Mark responded that he is unaware of this and that Ramsey County is looking to invest close to \$7 million dollars in the golf system and just invested millions in Keller golf course. There is still work to be done in the realignment of the Ramsey County Golf portfolio as outlined in the 2018 study.

**Brian Tempas** will be meeting with his County Commission and wanted to remind the group to make sure to reach out and stay connected.

#### **Director Update:**

Mark thanked the Commission for their participation tonight and asked if there is interest in going through the Engagement for the West Arena project. The Commission responded affirmatively.

*The meeting was adjourned at 7:34pm by Jordan Nelson*

**Next Meeting:** October 13, 2021