



RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

September 11, 2019 – 6:00 PM

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT: 2015 VAN DYKE STREET, MAPLEWOOD, MN 55109

Attendees: Leah Shepard (AL), Mark Erickson (AL), Jordan Nelson (incoming-2), Brian Tempas (3), Melissa Wenzel (6), Bryan Shirley (5)

Not in Attendance: Jessica Pitzel (1), Metric Giles (4), Candy Petersen (7)

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm by Leah Shepard.

Approval of Agenda & Approval of the Minutes

Brian Tempas motioned for approval of the June 12th, 2019 minutes and September 11th, 2019 agenda, Jordan Nelson seconded. All Approved. *Motion carried.*

Policy & Planning Draft Naming Policy

Jolie Wood from the Policy and Planning Division and Johanna Berg, Deputy County Manager from the Economic Growth and Community Investment reviewed development and highlights of the Draft County Wide Naming Policy.

Development:

- Instigated by the collapse of the Vadnais Sports Center Dome
- Old policy was from 1998 and does not reflect racial equity, community engagement, and a consolidated departmental approach
- Consultation meetings were held with Parks, Libraries, Attorney's office, Finance and more, while also looking at naming policies from other governmental entities across the U.S.

Highlights:

- Nomenclature will be based on the area, location, purpose or natural features, naming after individuals is being moved away from
- Overall, no naming rights over parts of a facility
- A separate donor policy is still being explored, Parks has a current memorial bench and tree program
- It will not trigger a comprehensive review of existing names, but names can be reviewed if an issue comes to light
- Community Engagement Policy is in the late stages of development

The Parks Commission would appreciate viewing the donor policy when complete as well as the racial equity policy and community engagement policy mentioned in the draft. *Leah questioned if there was community engagement in the formulation of the Community Engagement Policy? Jolie will follow-up on this.*

Parks Commission Tour Highlights/Notes

Mark Thanked the commission members that participated in the tour and asked for feedback. Brian Tempas felt it was one of the best tours and liked the mix of sites and ability to walk around the sites. Bryan Shirley recalls the Owasso Park planning meetings and that it was interesting to see which ideas made it to final production. Melissa



appreciated County Commissioner representation. Mark suggested visiting arenas to see the different uses and how the residents interact with the facilities.

Planning Updates

Snail Lake Beach Improvements:

Mark summarized the long-term flooding issues at Snail Lake Regional Park. Gus Blumer gave background regarding past actions taken regarding flooding, its causes and the unique challenges of the Snail Lake area and its watershed.

- Ramsey County has committed to re-opening the beach while factoring in future resiliency
- New beach elevation is based on updated watershed projections, it also addresses ADA needs
- Goal is to have the beach ready by 2020 Parks season

Battle Creek Upper Afton Natural Resource Project:

Mike Goodnature explained the high ecological significance of the Battle Creek Area as designated by the MN DNR. There are mesic and old growth (oak) woodlands. Unfortunately, the area is also the epicenter for invasive species. Restoration began in 2015 as a 72-acre project with a conservation partners legacy grant from the DNR. Over the years this funding has totaled \$738,000 with a 10% County match. This has expanded the restored area to 215 acres. County CIP funding maintains the land, the cost will decrease over time as the native plants better establish themselves.

- Mike reviewed the many areas that are being restored or converted from turf to native prairie, goals are to reduce mowing and increase pollinator habitat
- Some areas were too steep to farm, preserving old woodland areas
- Bird Surveys are conducted to gauge the wildlife returning to the restored areas

Melissa asked for information and resources about prescribed burns. Mike will communicate the data base that has the scheduled burns.

Master Plan Updates/Key Dates

Gus updated that there is a consultant heading the community engagement process for the Battle Creek Master Plan.

- Already hosted several pop-up meetings
- Launched an online survey
- Participated in numerous community/cultural events
- At-Large meetings held during busy times at the BC recreation center and BC waterpark
- Meetings with special interest community groups
- 2nd phase is beginning with the purpose to analyze what has been collected, pinpoint groups/area that have been missed, and engage those groups
- Dates for design workshops and stakeholder meetings are still being determined and will be communicated to the Parks Commission

Mark recognized the hard work of Ben Karp in facilitating all the above types of meetings.



Parks Joint Commission Meeting or City Meeting

The Parks commission revisited the value of conducting joint meetings with other recreation entities. It seems there is limited value unless there is a proposed/current joint project. The Parks staff seemed to gain more value from the meeting. The commission members may voluntarily go to city's/agency's meeting. However, this would not be in place of a regular meeting. The commission encourages the staff to continue these meetings and extend the invite to commission members. Mark will check with Kris Lencowski as to what current activities are happening with other agencies.

Directors Report

Mark discussed the 2020-2021 Ramsey County Budget with the recommendation to close the Ponds of Battle Creek golf course. This was difficult news for the staff of Ponds especially in light of all the ecological projects completed and work put into the course. The decision was made in consideration of the Golf System Study results. In the past the Ponds was to pay back its initial investment and has been unable to do that. The County forgave \$5 million dollars of debt. The County Board will vote on this budget in December, there is another public hearing in November. The City of Maplewood will be worked with closely to determine the future use of the land and a significant public engagement process will occur. *Commission members asked which Commissioners supported this recommendation?* Commissioner McDonough and MatasCastillo are in support of developing the area for different residential use.

Ramsey County has again added Battle Creek Snowmaking to its legislative bonding projects list. This will be the last year it will be on the County's agenda since it has reached the end of its life cycle. There is more confidence that the project will be funded. Even if it does not secure bonding, there are other options such as working with private groups that are looking to fund.

Report from the Chair & Other Commissioners

Brian Tempas asked for an update on the TCAPP project. Mark updated that the 98-acre parcel has been officially transferred to Ramsey County. The Rice Creek Commons project has stalled while Arden Hills and Ramsey County are in mediation. Ramsey County looking to dissolve the joint powers agreement.

Leah asked for an update on the Pig's Eye Lake Project. \$4.3 million dollars was granted from the Lessard-Sam's Fund in combination with the \$8 million from the Army Corps of Engineers to build islands and for habitat restoration in Pig's Eye Lake. The Metropolitan council weighed in on public concerns that community was not engaged in the process and the use of dredge spoils to make the islands. All dredge spoils will have gone through extensive EPA testing, but there is enough confidence from preliminary tests that the material is safe to use. There was a public comment period and public engagement process that occurred, and details are online. Currently the project is in design phase with construction to begin Fall 2020. The project continues to move ahead. Lake Pepin has similar islands as those proposed for Pig's Eye, which has been a successful restoration project.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned by group consensus at 7:52pm