

RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

MEETING Minutes

OCTOBER 13, 2021 – 6:00 PM

VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

Commission Members In-Attendance: Gregory Williams (AL), Michael Berger (1), Vice-Chair: Jordan Nelson (2), Brian Tempas (3), Metric Giles (4), Snowdon Herr (6), Candy Petersen (7)

Ramsey County Parks Staff in Attendance: Mark McCabe, Kristopher Lencowski, Thony Thao, Brett Blumer, Solomon Tsega, Angela Marlette

Jordan Nelson stated that, “Due to the ongoing health pandemic, particularly because of the delta variant, as Vice-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 Vice-chair Jordan Nelson at 6:03pm. Michael “Mike” Berger motioned to approve the October 13, 2021 agenda and Brian Tempas seconded. All approved and **Motion carried**. Candy Petersen motioned to approve the September 8, 2021 meeting minutes and Mike seconded. All approved and **Motion carried**.*

Introduction of Thony Thao: Recreation Services Supervisor for Aquatics and Parks

Parks Ordinance Revision Update: Kris Lencowski, Parks & Trail Director

Kris reviewed the project history, racial equity review, and partners that participated in the project. The project goal was to look at the ordinance through an equity lens, examine park access and modernize/streamline the whole Park Ordinance. Questions were formulated around the different aspects of the current ordinance which resulted in almost 1500 survey responses and over 8,000 comments. A wide variety of contact methods were used from live zoom meetings, social media blasts and in Park signage with QR codes. While the community was able to respond to all parts of the Ordinance, three main topics emerged that needed a greater amount of community input:

- Parks Hours/Access
 - Community response overall supported 5a-11p
 - 24-hour access was not supported with a passionate public response
- Tobacco Use
 - General support for an overall smoking ban
- Fines and penalties
 - A tiered administrative fines approach was favored

In the process of leading up to the November 2, 2021 County Board Workshop a member of the public created a flyer with misinformation regarding the work and where the project is in the approval process. This garnered more feedback after the comment period had closed but was reflective of the original engagement responses. Mark commented that there is a risk when asking bold questions but because of these questions we learned even more about what community values such as rest time for natural areas. City and State laws are still enforced making it illegal to do many activities community had concerns about.

Parks Ordinance project page is here: <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/parks-recreation/planning-construction-restoration/park-ordinance-project>

After the workshop, the draft ordinance would be presented to the board for final edits. Then a public hearing would be set with before and during which the public can comment before the final reading of the ordinance. January 2022 would be the earliest potential time for approval.

Mike explained that there is a state statute that requires any ordinance to be treated as a misdemeanor, unless the ordinance or the governing body makes a specific penalty provision for an ordinance violation.

It's a relatively easy fix because if the county board adopts a new ordinance that puts in place penalty provisions that deviate from the default. From an equity standpoint this change is moving Parks in the right direction.

Metric asked about Workforce representation as a complementary component to the policies in Parks. Mark replied that the staff diversification is not specifically tied to the Park Ordinance work but rather a part of looking through a racial equity lens at all park work.

Online Reservation System Rollout: Kris Lencowski, Parks & Trail Director

The current reservation system that parks uses for ice, turf, Tamarack Nature Center and in the Parks was decommissioned October 12, 2021. Notification was given November 2021 which left parks on a very tight time frame to identify, evaluate (equity & community feedback), build, and launch a new system. Critical functions such as Tamarack registrations and Park Reservations are now live online with ice, turf and other functions continue to be built out and refined. <http://www.ramseycounty.us/parks&reccatalog>

Brian Tempas asked if an account must be created to use the system. In order to make and pay for a reservation in CivicRec an account is needed, but not to view available times or navigate in the system.

Planning & Development Project Updates: Brett Blumer, Landscape Architect (a.k.a. Gus)

Gus walked through a presentation reviewing Charles M Schultz Highland Arena and Reservoir Project, Lions Park, Tamarack Nature Center Garden House, Pavement maintenance and Keller Spoon Lake Improvements. Some Highlights are:

Charles M Schultz Highland Arena and Reservoir Project

- City of St. Paul to convert old reservoir site to soccer fields
- South rink water infiltration corrected
- Major parking lot improvements with raingarden/chamber storm water management features
- Clarence Wigington, first black architect in Minnesota, designed Highland Tower

Lions Park Shelter: Long Lake Regional Park

- Done in partnership with the City of New Brighton
- Reservations being taken for 2022
- Any new facility built in parks is made net zero

Tamarack Nature Center: Garden Building

- Brought the building up to code for year-round use
- Solar ready, permeable pavers

Pavement Maintenance Project

- Repair trails, lots, and drives into the park as well updating curb ramps and meeting ADA standards
- Repair stormwater infrastructure alongside the repairs

Keller Spoon Lake Improvements

- Repair and upgrade Boat launch and fix eroding shoreline
- Install new fishing pier courtesy of the MN DNR

Golf and Arena Revenue Update: Item tabled due to extended golf season

- Golf revenue was up even over last year's incredible performance
- Arena revenue was negatively impacted by the COVID restrictions

Racial Equity Topic - Hiring for Diversity Recap: Mark McCabe

- Recreation Services Supervisor job posting was an example of tools used to increase the diversity of the applicant pool
 - Promoted posting more broadly using both county connections (i.e., Equity Action Circle), social media and job sites that serve BIPOC job seekers
 - Used Banding instead of top 10, which allows a wider range of qualified candidates to be interviewed
 - Resulted in four extremely talented and diverse finalists
- Parks will be posting two Maintenance & Operations (M&O) worker positions
 - The M&O positions in Parks is least diverse and has the most positions so this will be a good opportunity to continue diversity work
- Recognize that October 11, 2021 was Indigenous Peoples Day
 - Ramsey County has been working with an American Indian Cohort pre-pandemic which is picking back up
 - Purpose is to partner and understand issues facing that population

Director Update

Phase 2 Bruce Vento Regional Trail Extension Project Open House is scheduled for October 21st at the Boat Works Commons Community Room from 4:30-6:30pm. This is an in-person event. More information and material will be provided on the website and through social media. Approximate 2500 direct mailings were sent out to residents along the corridor. <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/parks-recreation/planning-construction-restoration/bruce-vento-regional-trail-extension-%E2%80%93-whitaker-street-county-road-j>

Practice Arenas are opening up as staff transition out of Parks. Current COVID-19 protocols for Ramsey County require masks on and off the ice. Communities are pushing back on this since other arenas systems are not requiring this.

Meeting will continue online as COVID-19 transmission rates remain high.

Reminder that there is no scheduled meeting for December, November will be the last meeting in 2021.

Commission Member Update

Gregory Williams reported that on September 23, 2021 he met with Endurance United to discuss operational, planning goals and community outreach. Endurance United's strategic approach dovetails with Parks &

Recreation. They are also developing a more cohesive plan concerning Battle Creek snowmaking and trail enhancements. Also attended a meeting with Parks on September 13, 2021 on this topic. Pursuing a collaboration with Parks, Endurance United and St. Paul Winter Carnival to promote winter recreation activities such as skiing, fat tire biking, snowshoeing, winter soccer games and disc golf. Currently, the St. Paul Winter Carnival site does not have much 2022 information posted.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm by Gregory Williams

Next Meeting: November 10, 2021