

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

**NOVEMBER 9, 2022 – 6:00 PM**

Parks Administrative Building  
2015 Van Dyke Street in Maplewood Minnesota

**Commission Members In Attendance:** Chair - Gregory Williams (Chair), Leah Shepard, Mary Grams Basnight, Jordan Nelson, Brian Tempas (Vice-chair), Dr. Tamara Mattison, Savannah Lane, Snowdon Herr

**Guest:** Michael Schroeder, Rice Creek Watershed District

**Staff:** Ann White Eagle: Soil & Water Conservation Director, Michael Goodnature: Natural Resources Manager, Joe Lochner: Environmental Resource Specialist, Brian Olsen: Environmental Resource Specialist, Angela Marlette: Admin Assistant

The November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM by Chair, Gregory Williams.

*A motion was made by Snowden Herr and seconded by Leah Shepard, to accept the September 13, 2022, and the October 12, 2022, Meeting Minutes. **All Approved, Motion Carried***

*A Motion was made by Jordan Nelson and seconded by Leah Shepard to approve the November 9, 2022, Meeting Agenda with changes. **All Approved, Motion Carried.***

**Commission Chair Update:**

This transcript was provided by Greg for use in the meeting minutes. *“I’ll preface my Chair Update with, I have no ill will for anyone. I am only trying, in my capacity, to raise consciousness to some long-standing issues to facilitate Change! I ask for the sake of brevity and time that you please save your questions and comments until the end! Commissioners, I agree with Savannah’s observation last meeting, that the Commission meetings have moved away from Robert’s Rules of Order in process and timing. Commissions don’t work well when there is:*

*1.Lack of long-term agenda. 2.Reliance on bad information. 3.Inability to focus on the right issues. 4.Poor Involvement by one or more Members. 5.Lack of clear purpose. Looking through archived meeting minutes over the years there has been very little recorded interaction or engagement by Commissioners. Conversely, there has been a plethora of RCPR topics, projects, and introductions etc. Due to the lack of time given the Commission on tonight’s agenda and to follow Robert’s Rules of Order. I thought about an alternative. I proposed to Mark McCabe in our meeting last week, that we split our Commission meetings equitably between the RCPRC and RCPR. Allotting 40 minutes to each. If topics or projects were too big, an overview could be presented, and a meeting or workshop scheduled later. We are not governed by the RCPR we are their Partners, and We represent the Community! We are empowered by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners to report to the Board of Commissioners and RCPR in a solution oriented advisory capacity. Utilizing an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement lens we:*

- 1. Maintain an interest in and understanding of the function and operation of Parks and Recreation*
- 2. Analyze Operating and Long-Range Capital Budgets and make Recommendations.*
- 3.Review all projects large and small and make Recommendations.*
- 4.Participate in the timely review of long-range system and master plans and make Recommendations.*
- 5.Comment on RCPR Rules and Regulations and make Recommendations.*

*RC Battle Creek XC Ski Area Improvements Project: I for one do not support this project or its level of management. In digging deeper into this project, I have met with different stakeholders, subject matter experts and interested parties, including RCPR Directors and employees. I have reviewed plans, email communications and attended meetings. More than \$6,600,000.00 is currently being spent on the Battle Creek XC Ski area for: Snow making, Lighting, Trail Redesign, Maintenance Including the construction of a brand-new maintenance Facility that houses the brand-new Piston Bully trail Groomer. This serves a very small part of Ramsey County. This microcosm of XC skiers is not a very diverse population. XC Skiers are also above a certain income threshold. Moreover, this 6.6 million Dollar investment basically serves high school League XC ski racers at the moment. There are no Strong and Effective plans currently in place to make the Battle Creek Ski Area Equitable, include a more Diverse Population, Embrace Community, Engagement. Question, how can you have a 6.6 Million Dollar ski area that does not have its own warming*

facilities. Lencowski has developed a rudimentary MOU with the City of St. Paul Park and Recreation to use their next-door Community Center for changing and restroom usage, etc. A volleyball court, I am told...The City built THEIR Community Center to support THEIR adjacent athletic fields! Should people drop their kids off at the Ski area in 15 degree Winter weather to ski for 3 hours? It's like building your house and then going to your Next-door neighbors to use their Bathroom! Look at what the Loppet Foundation in Minneapolis has done! A model that could have been emulated in some way, shape, or form. Eliminating the reinvention of the wheel. BC is considered an advanced ski area and Not beginner friendly. Yes, the public is invited to ski at \$80.00 with an online ski pass. Ask yourself are you ready to look this up and buy one? How does this Project support Community Engagement and encourage New Skier programming? Current Community Engagement plans are sorely lacking. Due to the "Soft Opening" RCPR is planning and this effort will fall way short of any Current Community Engagement. There are and have been solutions offered but these have not been fully utilized or recognized by RCPR in a timely manner. We as a Commission have attended a project site meeting, yet no red flags were raised about: Community, Engagement, Programming, Equity, Inclusion. asked a number of questions there were no other questions asked from this Commission. You may remember me in a previous Commission Chair update, calling out Ramsey County's embarrassing Equity Score in the "U.S. News and World Reports "Healthiest Communities Rankings 2022". Carver County 25 miles away was ranked #5 in the Nation. We rank 9th in the State and 63rd in the Nation! Our Equity Score was 29 out of 100! What would that score represent in A- F Grading scale! [https://www.dropbox.com/s/dnt2pv2d08upkui/9\\_14\\_2022%20Chair%20Update.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/dnt2pv2d08upkui/9_14_2022%20Chair%20Update.pdf?dl=0) This low score does not represent anything but Lack of Change, Lack of Motivation, Lack of interest, Initiative, Innovation-outside the box thinking, Networking. None of which are Capital expenditures! Moreover, this low Equity Score represents a Long Standing Countywide Institutional Racism, Discrimination, Disparity, this is not necessarily 100% intentional but a legacy of the same old, same old complacency and Staunch Silo-ing! TIME FOR A CHANGE! Ok! This train has left the station, so we, as a Commission need to look forward to mitigate, offer solutions and make recommendations! Endurance United is a Major stakeholder/partner and Subject Matter Expert in this project. They would like to meet with us to give an understanding from their point of view! Formulate strategies, solutions, and recommendations. I ask that Commissioners please become engaged! Do some due diligence! Do your Research for possible solutions and recommendations! What are your ideas, solutions and recommendations moving forward!? Speak Up If You Care!!!

Given that this meeting represents the last RCPRC meeting of 2022, I am suggesting a future in person meeting of Commissioners at a restaurant, coffee shop or other establishment that could safely accommodate us. As always please feel free to contact me anytime. Peace, Greg "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."- John Quincy Adams"

### **Welcome New Commission Member: Mary Grams Basnight**

Greg welcomed Mary and she introduced herself as a 13-year resident of Saint Paul, but she has also lived in Minneapolis. She currently works at Thomson-Reuters and has experience practicing law as well as clerking for the Minnesota Court of Appeals. Each Commission Member and all other attendees introduced themselves and welcomed Mary.

### **Introduction to 2023 County Climate Change Performance Measure**

Ann White Eagle did a brief overview of the Soil & Water Comprehensive plan emphasizing that one of the plans objectives is climate change. (page 60)

[https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Environment/Conservation%20District/RCD%20Comp%20Plan\\_04-11-18.pdf](https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Environment/Conservation%20District/RCD%20Comp%20Plan_04-11-18.pdf)

- Since most land is privately owned the focus is on private land ownership
- Parks is part of the greater service team in Ramsey County called Economic Growth and Community Investment (EGCI) which is working together to create larger and wider solutions on Ramsey County strategic priorities. One of which is Climate Change.
  - Already a focus on energy consumption with Ramsey County Buildings and fuel usage.
  - Parks recognized that there is more to it and as the second largest landowner with significant greenspace more can be done.

### **Overview of Restorations at County Parks: Mike Goodnature**

- CO2 is the largest contributor to global climate change and data is showing that temperatures are increasing due.

- Current strategies include Net Zero Energy use goal for all facilities and Fleet gaining more electric powered equipment.
- While this will reduce CO2 emissions, Ramsey County can do more by capturing CO2 emissions.
  - Carbon sequestering can happen on quality land and that is where Parks comes into action. Wetlands and Prairie are the top for capturing carbon due to underground storage.
    - Hence the reason for removing invasive, non-native woodlands and restoring prairie/ oak savannah.
    - Also, the reason the federal & state protects wetlands.
  - Acquired \$3 million in state grants in past 8 years to restore areas to high quality native prairie and have already seen the return of rare warblers to the area. Check out <https://ebird.org/home> for Long Lake Regional Park.

#### **Invasive Species: Justin Townsend**

- By 2080 Minnesota is predicted to have the climate of Kansas with the increasingly rapid colonization of invasive species.
- How do we prevent this rapid colonization of Invasive species in Ramsey County?
  - Education, Education, Education of private landowners and staff with new tech.
  - Physical deterrents such as brush stations, boat decon. units and bike cleaning stations.
  - Quick, Rapid response with treatment of priority species such as the dramatic removal of infested Ash trees and planting of more diverse species to prevent Emerald Ash Borer.
- Partnerships are key and during breakout time this will be explored with the Commission Members.

#### **Restorations on Private Lands and Other Properties: Joe Lochner & Brian Olsen**

- Designing Stormwater Infrastructure and how do we adapt our landscapes to respond to periods of high rain and mitigate drought.
  - Raingardens, Swales, Stormwater treatment not only to capture water but also protect water quality through the capture of pollutants.
  - Because much of the county is privately owned, SWCD relies on partners to install these best management practices throughout the county.
  - Work with watershed districts that have access to grants and can work with landowners in designing projects as well as with the Watersheds themselves and projects they have.
  - All the Soil and water projects are self-supporting and have not had to take any Levy funds because of the fee for service items.

#### **Commission Member Feedback on Project Restoration**

Thank you, Michael Schroeder, for coming as he represents one of the Watershed Districts Ramsey County Soil & Water Conservation Division works most closely with.

At this time the Parks Commission broke into smaller groups paired with Soil & Water Staff and spent time in discussion and gathering feedback from the Commission members.

*Note-Brian Tempas resumed running the meeting as Greg needed to leave.*

#### **Upcoming 2023 Administrative Items: Angela Marlette**

- Reminder that Parks Commission Members are no longer by District or by specific County Board Commissioner, rather it's a whole board decision that enable greater diversity of members and be able to pick the best person for the seat. They still need to live in Ramsey County.
- Coming in January starting on the 2023 Work Plan
- Coming in January 2023 Chair Appointments, in the By-laws
- Coming in January, Annual By-law Review

#### **Commission Member update:**

- 2 new County Commissioners, Mai Chong Xiong and Rena Moran.
- Brian encouraged the Commission Members to contact their commissioner on at least a quarterly basis.
- Leah asked if there was going to be discussion about Roberts Rules use in the meeting. Brian relayed that Savannah Lane's main concern was how people interjected into the meeting and wanted to make sure that people were allowed to finish before moving to the next item. Leah commented that ultimately, it is Greg who facilitates the meeting and would make sure Roberts Rules are being used.

**Director Update: No director update**

*Leah motioned for adjournment at 7:35pm*

**Next Meeting:** January 11, 2023