

RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

NOVEMBER 13, 2019 – 6:00 PM

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

Attendees: Leah Shepard (AL), Jessica Pitzel (1), Melissa Wenzel (6), Metric Giles (4), Candy Petersen (7)

Not in Attendance: Brian Tempas (3), Jordan Nelson (2), Bryan Shirley (5)

Guests: Denise Barreto

Staff: Kris Lencowski, Benjamin Karp, Angie Marlette

The meeting was called to order at 6:07pm by Leah Shepard.

Approval of Agenda

Candy Petersen motioned for approval of the November 13, 2019 agenda. All Approved. *Motion carried.*

Approval of the Minutes

Melissa Wenzel submitted for correction the spelling of the acronym of the Board of Water and Soil Resources is BWSR. All Approved to accept the minutes from the October 9, 2019 meeting. *Motion carried.*

Battle Creek Master Plan Update

Ben Karp: Planning & Development Team

First of Phase 2 Engagement meetings took place November 2, 2019 at the Battle Creek recreation center.

Themes explored with the community were:

- Addition of nature center, partnerships
- Snow making for cross country skiing and future winter recreational activities
- Safer crossings
- Additional Shelter and Parking
- Archery and Public Art.
- Open Space possibilities and other inholdings inside the park
- Preservation of natural areas instead of development
- Felt adequate amount of paved trails
- Links to Fish Creek

These will be shared with the other stakeholder groups for their input. Another Design charette will happen in March 2020 before a finalized concept plan is created.

Melissa pointed out the very different demographics of two different meeting she has attended and how that is balanced. Ben explained the diversity of stakeholders that are sought out for input and all information is weighted equally. Going to these meetings is not the only way groups can be heard. Jessica asked how summer vs winter use is balanced. All uses are considered. When the group was discussing the Battle Creek Winter Recreation Area, Metric Giles wanted to be sure that Parks is making sure that there is equitable input, especially in light of the Eurocentric-ness of winter activities. He questioned, how do we get people to come to more culturally diverse activities that may be added to the Parks? Kris Lencowski explained the proactive way engagement has been conducted, for example visiting Hmong Town Market and seeking input from other geographical and diverse socioeconomic areas that use Battle Creek Park. Metric suggested using action related research to assist bringing people to those types of events. Ben asked for any groups that may have been overlooked for input. Melissa

suggested renters, as they make up 50% of the area's population. Metric suggested to gather input at the Dismantling White Supremacy event at Metro State on November 15-16.

Park Picnic Survey Results and Reservation Update

Kris Lencowski: Director of Operations: Parks and Trails

A survey is sent to all those with reservations for feedback:

- 1800 rentals with 156,000 people at those sites
- Reviewed most/least popular sites
- Reviewed the diversity of groups that use the sites
- Next year, additional questions will be added asking how to increase use by different cultures
- Satisfaction ratings of the facilities, reservation process, feeling of safety in the parks... overall very good
- Future ideas to increase reservations for less popular times

One future discussion to be brought to the Commission is the change in Parks hours and how that can affect safety. Metric began a discussion regarding park demographics, how to access that, using that to make our parks relevant to all populations and tell a better narrative about the parks. Kris explained that the Metropolitan Council has people out in the parks asking questions at certain parks, certain times following very specific guideline and is done once every four years. Parks heavily uses this data. Leah pointed out that money is spent on projects yet very little is used for learning about the people that are using our parks, in what capacity and it what is being done in the park working. Many Commission members would be interested in supporting this being allocated in the budget. Currently, the County is focusing is community engagement to promote racial equity, determining public wants and needs and a source for qualitative data. Denise Barreto also suggested that we catch information from people who inquire into reservations but do not reserve.

Relationships Matter Now: Denise Barreto

Denise is the managing partner for the company, Relationships Matter Now, based out of Evanston, Illinois. She introduced herself; her history with Parks and Recreation, her public service as an elected official and that she is a current Parks & Recreation appointee in her city. Denise explained the importance of creating a story behind what Parks does and how Parks & Recreation is valuable to the community. Her business sits at the intersection of public and private partnerships with revenue coming from both. She works on getting people from talking about racial equity to action through "true" internal and external engagement in how everyone fits into the story begin told, ending with "true" collaborative action. Denise thanked the Commission for their time, offered her services and expressed gratitude to be able to participate in this meeting. Group discussion continued about with stories about equitable access in hiring practices. Leah asked if there are any trends she is seeing. Currently there is a trend towards community engagement, but usually without a professional assisting with questions or the actual engagement. Because of this, often the questions are leading and only reinforce what the agency wants to be done. Other agencies are discovering that homogeneity is not just race but also economic. Another trend is the talent shortage in Parks & Recreation with a contributing factor being the low pay while costing an expensive degree.

Directors Update:

- Kris reported that after some hard work, Long Lake Regional Park is serving as host to Ice Castles. This is a great example of Parks working to be nimble in capturing opportunities for residents and Ramsey County. Opens as soon as things are frozen and remains until melting begins.
- New County Commissioner Nicole J Frethem was elected to serve in District #1 and completes the remainder of the term of one year.
- Budget Approval is voted on December 17th, 2019 in which the closure of Ponds is detailed.

- Aldrich Project final asphalt laying we delayed and will be completed in the spring, 2020.
- Battle Creek Playground is moving forward on time, August Grand Open planned.

Report from the Chair & Other Commissioners

Melissa commented on the amount of lawn signs and vocal-ness of keeping the ponds. She desires to hear about the benefits/talking points of future use of the site.

Adjournment

Leah asked for adjournment, Melissa motioned. Meeting adjourned at 8:52pm.

Next Meeting: January 8, 2020

Happy New Year