

**RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
JOINT MEETING WITH THE
CITY OF MAPLEWOOD PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

MINUTES

February 11, 2015, 6:00 p.m.

Maplewood Community Center ~ Maplewood, MN

Ramsey County Commission Members Absent: Deb Falkowski and Phil Jenni

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

DuWayne Konewko, the Director of Maplewood Parks and Recreation opened up the meeting and welcomed everyone. Maplewood Council Member Marylee Abrams expressed her excitement about our two Parks and Recreation Commissions coming together to share in common themes and welcomed the group. Around the table introductions:

Chuck Turning – recording from Ramsey Washington Suburban Cable Commission Government Access TV

Kara Coustry – Administrative Assistant, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation

Bryan Shirley – Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission

Craig Brannon – Maplewood Parks and Recreation Commission

Julie Hansa – High School Student Representative

Brian Tempas – Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission

Rich Straumann – Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission

Nikki Villavicencio – Maplewood Parks and Recreation Commission

Ron Cockriel – Maplewood Parks and Recreation Commission

Marylee Abrams – Maplewood Council Member

Candy Peterson – Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission

Gale Pederson – Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission

Matt Prom – Maplewood Parks and Recreation Commission

Metric Giles – Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission

Mike Wilde – Maplewood Parks and Recreation Commission

Terri Mallet – Maplewood Parks and Recreation Commission

Rick Brandon – Maplewood Parks and Recreation Commission

Jack Ditmore – Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission

Jon Oyanagi – Director, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation

Jim Taylor – Parks Manager, Maplewood Parks and Recreation

Duwayne Konewko – Director of Maplewood Parks and Recreation

Community Member – Kiara

Maplewood Chair, Ron Cockriel welcomed everyone and kicked off the agenda. Jon Oyanagi mentioned how he met the Mayor of Maplewood, Nora Slawick at our Keller Regional Park Grand Opening and Keller Regional Golf Course Grand Re-opening where he learned she was a Parks and Recreation Major.

COUNTY AND CITY PARTNERSHIPS

- A. Fish Creek – The County owns 140 acres in Fish Creek, and now the City of Maplewood owns 70 acres of land through state bond funds. There are also additional acres (approx. 25) of preserve to the north. Staff have toured this beautiful site together to brainstorm ideas for its development.

The County had informal talks with staff from the Metropolitan Council about the possibility of making the Fish Creek area a Regional Park, which would provide additional funding not accessible to county and city parks. The threshold for a Regional Park classification is 300 acres, but significant resources can also serve to qualify the area as a Regional Park. It's under the size requirement currently, but there are significant resources on the site that could also qualify it for a Regional Park.

The City of Maplewood has \$318,000 and four years to spend state bond funds. Maplewood wants to make sure their spending is in line with the regional park concept, which is why they are meeting with Ramsey County. The City of Maplewood Master Plan was already approved, but may be tweaked based on more group discussions. Long range plans might even include the relocation of Maplewood's Nature Center if resources are in place.

Mr. Cockriel mentioned that North Oak Church has offered to swap five (5) acres of land, which could provide parking and was also the site where the Indian Mounds were knocked down.

- B. Tuj Lub – Both the city and the county were considering building courts to accommodate a Hmong game of top spin called Tuj Lub. Joining together in this effort, both parties are now planning a larger Tuj Lub court system at Keller Regional Park, near the Golfview picnic shelters. Keller picnic facilities are popular on weekends with the Hmong community, so having the courts near these shelters is nice companion amenity.

We are proposing two Tuj Lub court locations. A single court will be located to the north, closer to the picnic shelters. Three sets of courts located further down the hill would be more suited for league or tournament play so bigger crowds can convene without disturbing the picnickers. We have been working with Tuj Lub players to determine the best court system and materials to use.

There is parking available closer to the picnic shelters, but there are also plans to enlarge the existing parking lots. Provided we get the funding lined out, we hope to begin construction this year and start seed for grass so courts would be ready for play in 2016. We will remove a current trail leading down to the lower three courts and replace it with an ADA accessible trail, which will also serve the archery range.

A synthetic grass mixed with sod will be placed at the head of the courts to guard against turf issues from heavy traffic in this area. The company providing this product is from Ohio, but would look at partnering with a local sod farm if contracted. Mr. Brannon questioned the possibility of using this type of turf system for other applications such as soccer. The City of Maplewood has been costing that as well.

Mr. Cockriel suggested a portage in and out at that dam would be really nice. Then people could canoe all five lakes because it's only a 20 yard portage. Mr. Oyanagi suggested the funding would be tight for the bare essentials of the current Tuj Lub court project and doubted a portage would be funded at this time.

- C. Disc Golf at Battle Creek Regional Park is another joint effort of the City and the County. This course would be located on the east side of Battle Creek Regional Park. Staff have walked 18 holes in this area with their natural resource representatives to identify a path that avoids harming trees. There have been no official plans drawn up yet. Three-quarters of the course would be along existing ski trails, but to avoid mature oaks, the path at the 17th and 18th holes would need to veer from the existing trail.

The timeline on this project is further out, maybe two years or more, with Fish Creek and Tuj Lub as priority projects. Parking for this would most likely be in the main lot at Battle Creek Park at the Dog Park, or at the Athletic Complex, where the first disc golf hole would be placed.

- D. Other Ideas – Go Ape is a company that builds a ropes course with zip lines. They construct and operate the course. We are only in the exploratory stage of this right now, but are looking at the possibility of having a course at Battle Creek. Since it would be up in the trees, such a course could go in right overhead of a dog park, or trail for instance.

Mr. Taylor mentioned two other joint efforts. The City of Maplewood received the \$392,000 from the Safe Routes to School Grant to finish the County Road B Trail. They have been working with the County Transportation Office and expect to finish this year. The signal crossing at White Bear and County Road B will be redone, which will get the kids off the street and onto a trail. Last year, the City of Maplewood and Ramsey County completed the Marsh Lands Trail (a soft surface trail), which comes from Holloway Avenue, through Holloway Marsh and ends at Sterling.

Mr. Cockriel mentioned The Go-Ramsey County collaboration was a very positive step for all residents who can now visit one site that identifies city and county resources combined. Mr. Oyanagi brought up another collaborative effort happening now – the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan. This is headed by the Active Living group who is working to pull together county and cities plans into one master plan.

Mr. Cockriel asked if the County was looking into any outdoor amphitheaters. Mr. Oyanagi mentioned there is nothing in the works, although a smaller version of an amphitheater has been discussed as part of the Tamarack Nature Center remodel. Mr. Oyanagi recognized the need for large group recreating areas.

MAPLEWOOD PARKS SYSTEM MASTER PLAN

Mr. Taylor provided a quick overview of the recently approved Maplewood Parks and Recreation System Master Plan, which is their strategic plan for the next 20 years. This two year planning process involved over 800 residents, including teens and city staff across all departments. Their system is roughly 2,000 acres with 35 city parks and preserves, and three regional parks and six county parks.

They identified some trends being toward non-traditional sports, quality over quantity, environmental consciousness, climate change, safety concerns and public art; and created six guiding principles:

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|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Safe and Welcoming Parks | 4) Promote Environmental Stewardship |
| 2) Connect People and Places | 5) Inspire Creativity and Learning |
| 3) Encourage Health and Wellness | 6) Financial Sustainability |

Mr. Cockriel called out the location south of City Hall where there is a cluster of city and county property, and thought that would be a good spot for some type of outdoor shared amenity, especially considering the vast amount of parking available.

Ms. Pederson asked about attendance of community meetings and open houses used for input on this strategic plan. Mr. Taylor remarked that attendance at the first two was low, so they changed the concept by offering root beer floats, or ice cream bars to get more families involved. At one in the south, they used the old fire station to set up a jump castle and offered ice cream, which drew a lot of families out of their houses to contribute. They also attended community events and set up booths. Mr. Taylor and Mr. Konewko visited different areas of the community and interviewed folks and park users, in addition to using a statistically valid survey.

Their full Master Plan is online at: <http://www.ci.maplewood.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/11875>

SHARED VISIONS

City of Maplewood Parks and Recreation Department: *“To help create a vibrant community that embraces diversity, celebrates arts and culture, values health and wellness, and promotes stewardship of the environment.”*

Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department: *“A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.”*

RAMSEY COUNTY SYSTEM UPDATE AND 2015 IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Mr. Oyanagi touched on current projects of Ramsey County including the addition of the Early Learning Center at Tamarack Nature Center; a new pole barn Maintenance Facility at Manitou Ridge; Lower Fish Creek Restoration; Northwest Bluffs Wildlife Habitat Project; Rice Creek Regional Trail Extension from Long Lake Regional Park to County Road H; Rice Creek Commons (TCAAP) including a new interchange and crossover 35W and 10 at County Road H, and a new trail connecting County Road I to Hwy 96.

Mr. Oyanagi also spoke to \$885,000 in maintenance improvements for 2015 in Maplewood including the Keller driving range and lot reconstruction; Keller Maintenance parking lot and road mill and overlay, Keller Golf View in park trail reclamation; and the Administrative Building East Yard parking lot, exterior wash bay and fuel tank replacement project.

Other major projects in the works for 2015 include an Aquatic Invasive Species Plan, Americans with Disabilities Act Plan, Bike and Pedestrian Plan and the soon to be formed Arena Task Force. This task force is being pulled together to analyze and make recommendations to the future of the Ramsey County Arena System. Ramsey County has 13 sheets of ice and part of the drive for analyzing the arenas has to do with the refrigerant R22 that will no longer be produced. The estimated cost to convert refrigerants is 1 million per sheet of ice.

DISCUSSION

At the State Legislature, we submitted operation of maintenance funding to increase our Regional Park funding, which helps at Keller and Battle Creek Regional Parks. Contacting local legislators to ensure support for that initiative will help. The request is for an increase from 2.87 million per year, divided among all ten implementation agencies) to 4.5 million per year. This means Ramsey County Parks and Recreation would receive approximately \$150,000 more in funding per year, which is still only funding at a 10% level of what it costs to operate our Regional Parks.

The governor might do a bonding bill, even though it is not a bonding year. A request for Regional Park projects that were not funded last year, including the parking lots at Keller Regional Park, Long Lake Regional Park in New Brighton, and the Destination Winter Recreation Area at Battle Creek has been submitted. The Winter Recreation Area would have a snow maker to help maintain snow on formal sledding and tubing, downhill skiing and snowboarding features. This winter proves the need for this, especially on the eastern metro because all the high school teams had to bus themselves to the western region to Elm Creek Park Reserve, Hyland Lake Park Reserve and Theodore Wirth Park.

Mr. Cockriel wondered when there could be a tunnel for pedestrians at Battle Creek Regional Park at McKnight and Upper Afton Roads. Those roads are even higher traffic volume and it would be nice to have that amenity in the eastern metro. Mr. Oyanagi said that would be something to consider when Ramsey County revisits the Battle Creek Master Plan.

Mr. Prom asked if the County had issues with aquatic invasive species and who has responsibility for eradication. Mr. Oyanagi explained the State is granting money for counties to assist the DNR with education and eradication efforts, because the DNR can't do it on their own. We do have issues with aquatic invasive species within the county, but there are also some places that have none.

Mr. Cockriel mentioned the City of Maplewood is pursuing arts, crafts and history in our parks and public spaces. Mr. Oyanagi mentioned Ramsey County would like more public art in parks but has no funding for that currently. He agreed the County would be eligible for those Legacy Arts and Heritage Funds, and that is something to look at.

Ms. Pederson asked if the City of Maplewood has community gardens and where. Mr. Taylor responded that Edgerton Park has 42 plots run by the City. They also have a partnership with Harvest Park at Hazelwood and County Road C, which has 900 plots, and Harmony has one in the school district. Mr. Taylor commented that for these to be successful, they have to be placed strategically around apartment and town home complexes rather than in an area of single family homes. The charge is minimal, \$15 per year, which doesn't even cover the cost. Also they are being constructed to be more accessible to seniors and people with disability by elevating them up higher.

With 5-8% growth in soccer per year, Mr. Tempas asked about the City's current soccer fields. Mr. Taylor stated that the City is able to keep up with demand currently and are only looking at adding one additional field proposed at Flicek. The City has six fields at Hazelwood (four of those lighted), a full-size field at Afton and Geranium, and Sherwood is used as a practice field. Northeast United Soccer Club is housed out of Hazelwood, which is where youth leagues play. Youth leagues have gotten smaller, so the City has been partnering with schools to keep them going. There are no domes, or indoor soccer fields, only open fields

ADJOURNMENT

Upon appropriate motion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kara Coustry