

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

MINUTES

**March 11, 2015, 6:00 p.m.
Battle Creek Recreation Center ~ Saint Paul, MN**

The meeting of the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Gale Pederson at 6:02 p.m., at the Battle Creek Recreation Center in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Members Present: Gale Pederson, Jack Ditmore, Deb Falkowski, Metric Giles, Phil Jenni, Candy Petersen, Rich Straumann

Members Absent: Bryan Shirley and Brian Tempas

Staff Present: Jon Oyanagi and Kara Coustry

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Candy Petersen moved, seconded by Rich Straumann that the agenda of the Parks and Recreation Commission be approved as emailed. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Jack Ditmore moved, seconded by Rich Straumann that the minutes of January 14, 2015 be approved. Motion carried unanimously. Rich Straumann moved, seconded by Jack Ditmore that the minutes of February 11, 2015 be approved with a minor correction (remove the superfluous "R" from the introductions portion). Motion carried unanimously.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

We are asking for an increase in the Regional Park "Operations and Maintenance Fund" from 2.87 million per year to 4.5 million per year, which would be divided among all ten implementation agencies. 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.

We are asking for 2 million to fund the Winter Recreation Area at Battle Creek for which the County would be required to match. We are holding a Summit to strategize how best to lobby for the Winter Recreation Area.

There is a bill proposed that eliminates the ability for cities and counties to use Eminent Domain for land acquisition for park development, as was done in Dakota County recently. Also, Minneapolis has been getting an interest payment for 15 years that should have been divided up among the ten implementing agencies.

OTHER UPDATES

Ramsey County Commissioners are in the process of appointing Arena Task Force members now. We anticipate the Arena Task Force will be officially established in April.

Rich reported that Active Living conducted a listening session related to the Bike and Pedestrian Plan in which 40-50 people were in attendance. There will be 4-6 different workshops and additional listening sessions with an October deadline. The Ramsey County Public Health intern has done a lot of the initial work, and a good GIS mapping portal has also been extremely helpful in this process.

At 6:30 p.m. we joined up with the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission for a joint meeting.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Members present from the Parks and Recreation Commission included Andy Trcka (Chair), Erick Goodlaw, Dave Haley, Emily Shively, Dan Marckel, Betsy Mowry, Susan Bishop (Vice Chair) and John Mountain. The Saint Paul Parks and Recreation director, Mike Hahm, was also in attendance with his executive assistant, Joan Phillips.

COUNTY AND CITY JOINT INTERESTS

1. Phalen / Keller Regional Park – Master Plans at both these parks have recently been updated. Phalen has a splash pad, waterfall feature, and a reconstructed bridge. The trail systems connect up between both parks. Keller has had all new shelters and a boardwalk added, in addition to the golf course and clubhouse renovation. Ramsey County is currently looking for a cost share to construct Tuj Lub courts in the south end of Keller Regional Park.
2. Battle Creek Recreation Regional Park – Ramsey County provided an update on the proposed four million dollar snow making effort at Battle Creek Regional Park and shared about the upcoming Winter Recreation Summit on March 19th at Keller Clubhouse. The Master Plan at Battle Creek Regional Park will be revisited in the next four years. Other ideas at this park include a Disc Golf Course and a possible ropes course in the trees hosted by GoApe. Also, Ramsey County has also received grant funding from the DNR for natural resources rehabilitation at Bluff Creek and Fish Creek.
3. Pig's Eye Lake – We are redoing the Master Plan in the same way as Phalen / Keller using the principles of the Great River Passage Plan, which is Saint Paul's comprehensive plan for the river. Three focuses include more connectivity, more natural and more recreational elements. The Army Corps of Engineers proposed dredging to make islands for area habitat creation. The Department of the Interior is meeting at Harriet Island this Saturday. A member of public stated he was opposed to using Pig's Eye Lake as a dump site for dredgings.

A member of public commented that District 1 has extensive park land, but no access points into the parks. The Great River Passage Plan calls for north, south and midpoint access. He mentioned there is legislation by MN DOT for a State Rail Plan funded by four billion in local, state and federal subsidies to railroads. This would significantly increase freight and rail traffic between now and 2040. Also, there is a 40 million dollar legislative proposal to give 20 million each to two large foreign interests through the Port Authority to subsidize carp damage. This would lead to 4,000 / month increase in truck traffic.

4. Arena System Task Force – Ramsey County shared plans to appoint an Arena Task Force to conduct research, gather public input and make recommendations to the County Commission regarding the future of the Ramsey County Arena System. Fifty percent of our rinks are in Saint Paul.

5. Funding for Outdoor Recreation in Regional Parks – We are asking the Legislature for an increase in Operations and Maintenance Funding in addition to 7 million that didn't get funded last year. This funding would include Keller Regional Park trails and parking lot enhancements.
6. Lexington Regional Trail – There have been discussions to designate Lexington Trail as a regional trail. There currently is a trail along much of Lexington Avenue.
7. Highland Arena – Ramsey County updated Saint Paul regarding a capital project by Cretin-Derham Hall for facility improvements. Additionally, Ramsey County will be installing an elevator and repairing a sewer line leading from the facility. At some point, the parking lot drainage issue will need to be addressed as water is currently running back into the arena, especially the south rink. Work on this could involve Saint Paul's maintenance facility and golf course.
8. Racial Equity / Concentrated Financial Poverty – Metropolitan Council has nearly finished the 2040 plan which includes strategies for eliminating community disparities. This is a regional problem that will require a regional solution and collaboration. For Ramsey County, the new goals set by the County Board will support this plan. For Saint Paul, three out of five significant park projects highlight their priority on racial equity: China Friendship Garden and Annual Dragon Festival at Phalen Park, Hmong / Korean celebration in McMurray, Frog Town Park, Trout Brook and Arlington Hills Recreation Center.

Some questions that were raised included: How do we define equity; What are the demographics of who we are talking about; How do we reach these people; What outcomes are we seeking; How do we create nature based activities in an urban area; How to use Regional funding for these initiatives; How to change institutional systemic issues with limited resources; Does collaboration happen systematically; How to bring more people, school districts, health departments, etc., together to raise awareness.

Collaborating with schools and recreation centers, and providing access primarily through transportation would help to get the kids involved. We should assess what we do have and create relationships while removing safety barriers through lighting, patrols and education. Metric Giles proposed a joint sub-committee be formed to establish a work plan. Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission wanted to visit this topic in more detail in subsequent meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kara Coustry