

# RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

## MINUTES

September 9, 2015, 6:00 p.m.  
Parks and Recreation Department

The meeting of the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by Chair Gale Pederson at 5:58 p.m., at the Parks and Recreation Administrative Building in Maplewood, Minnesota.

Members Present: Gale Pederson, Cedrick Baker, Deb Falkowski, Metric Giles, Candy Petersen, Rich Straumann, Kong Vang

Members Absent: Bryan Shirley, Brian Tempas

Staff Present: Jon Oyanagi, Scott Yonke, Sara Ackmann, Sharon Chute

Guests: Paul Gruetzman, Rick Moore, Twin City Model Railroad Museum

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Kong Vang moved, seconded by Deb Falkowski that the agenda of the Parks and Recreation Commission be approved. Motion carried unanimously.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Deb Falkowski moved, seconded by Kong Vang that the minutes of August 12, 2015 be approved. Motion carried unanimously.

### **COMMISSION TERM UPDATES AND NEW MEMBERS**

Kong Vang is a high school teacher with the City of St. Paul at Washington Technology Magnet School. He grew up on the eastside of St. Paul near the Battle Creek park area. He worked over the summer for the National Park Service along the Mississippi river. Kong also serves on the Little Canada Parks and Recreation Commission. He is an advocate for parks.

### **RAILWAY MUSEUM AT LONG LAKE REGIONAL PARK**

[Twin City Model Railroad Museum](#) is proposing to build a museum near the depot at Long Lake Regional Park. Jon Oyanagi shared a list of pros and cons staff created regarding the proposal. Paul Gruetzman gave a brief history of the locations the museum has been housed at from 1939 to present day and reviewed other non-viable locations the museum has considered. Currently the museum is spread out at two locations and is eager to find a new unified location and believes that Long Lake Regional Park near the existing New Brighton Depot a good fit. To support their proposal Paul stated the [San Diego Model Railroad Museum](#) at Balboa Park in San Diego, California and [McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park](#), Scottsdale, Arizona are examples of railroad museums housed within park lands. Paul believes that after visitors have stopped by the museum they would enjoy spending time picnicking, swimming and hiking within Long Lake Regional Park. A map with the proposed location and building (60 ft. long, 14,000 sq. ft. with community room or 10,000 sq. ft. without) was reviewed. A food truck could be brought in on weekends to eliminate the need for a restaurant which could reduce square footage of the building. Building costs are estimated at \$800-900,000. The most popular event offered is Night Trains, which begins the first Saturday in November and ends the last Saturday in February. They anticipate 600-700 people each Saturday evening. Typical users of the museum are parent(s) and child(ren). A drawing showing the building to scale within the environment

was reviewed. The front corners of the building could be angled back to present a smaller face of the building. A portion of the restored prairie would remain. Currently the depot has 37 parking spaces. The museum would add an additional 13 spaces bringing the total to 50 spaces. Parking for normal weekends would be adequate. During Night Trains parking near the pavilion would be required. Commission is concerned that future expansion could provide a negative impact to park users. Paul invited the commission to come out for a visit to the Bandana Square location, Saturdays from 10am-5pm, Sundays Noon-5pm.

Scott Yonke questioned if proposed building location is within park land or if it is on right-of-way land owned by Bellaire Builders. He also stated that Bellaire Builders may be adding an additional rail in the future. It was stated that the current track has limited use to transport building materials to Fridley.

Rich Straumann suggested that the large train could tie into the museum with train rides and believes the City of New Brighton would be very interested in this addition given history of their depot and stated that this would provide more winter use of the park. Which brought up the need to plow roads and parking lots that are currently not plowed. Paul stated that the museum anticipates contributing to maintenance.

Deb Falkowski stated that the proposal really hinges on whose property the building would sit on and if it wasn't park land, how much the land would cost to acquire or if they would let the museum build on their land.

Jon Oyanagi asked the commission to consider if they thought this was a compatible use of the Long Lake Regional Park and reminded the commission that attendance of the museum would be counted towards regional park counts.

Cedrick Baker asked how many people the museum would serve per year. Paul stated, expected attendance is 30,000 (1/3 - 1/2 from Night Trains), in addition summer and Sundays are slowest, leaving Saturday as busiest.

Kong Vang asked why museum representatives consider Long Lake an option. Paul stated that Long Lake has always been an option and that museum representatives previously had attended City Council meetings regarding this location.

Metric Giles asked how they promote to the public. Paul stated they use Groupon, Living Social, social media and other outlets. They would like to expand program offerings to include birthday parties, circus weekend, group programming (including scouts and schools) and they would like to be able to rotate exhibits. Metric also asked if they had any demographic statistics and stated that African Americans were historically a large workforce to the railway industry and inquired if they had plans to include displays or programming addressing this. Paul stated they didn't have plans or demographics but could see visual displays regarding this issue on the walls.

Gale Pederson asked if they anticipate serving inner-city school groups. Paul stated that currently they are unable to serve any groups as they are housed very close to an office that isn't conducive to noise. A new facility would open new opportunities. He believes that school groups, group homes, persons with physical and mental challenges would regularly visit the museum as they currently have to turn these groups away. Entrances fees are \$8/weekend, \$6/weekday, and ages 4 and under are free. In closing, Gale stated that a cost analysis of the building would be helpful, and stated they need to find out who owns the land and then the commission will discuss after these findings.

### **FISH CREEK PLAN**

Scott Yonke reviewed the location of Fish Creek. The area is owned by Ramsey County and City of Maplewood and is 209 acres total. The area is broken into two sections, one of which has a conservation easement that limits recreational use to small scale use only. Ramsey County and Maplewood want to treat the area as one contiguous park property. Maplewood has proposed natural terrain footpaths and paved trails with observation areas that have great views of Pigs Eye and Mississippi River. Sections outside of conservation easement can provide greater

recreation use. An 8-acre section could include a picnic shelter with children's playground. Acquisition of additional land could provide a nearby parking lot or parallel parking could be worked into the location. Maplewood currently has \$300,000 that needs to be spent on the area. DNR grant guidelines approve a nature center on location at the farmstead area. Paved and natural trails would provide opportunity for interpretive programming and day camp sessions. Turf trail would follow the creek on either side. Grading of trails in this area may be challenging and some areas may not be accessible. The City of Maplewood conducted an archeological dig that would provide opportunities for interpretive programming. A Master Plan is currently being developed. Greater funding opportunities are available if the area is a Regional Park location.

Jon asked the commission if they thought the plan was a good fit for the location. The commission unanimously agreed that the fit is sound.

### **ARENA DISCUSSION**

The Arena Taskforce was enacted to help guide Ramsey County with the 11 arena facilities and 13 sheets of ice that will be impacted from the phase out of R22 refrigerant in 2020. The community engagement plan began in September and goes through October. Sara Ackmann reviewed a statistical spreadsheet of data regarding arenas. Rinks that operate with multiple sheets of ice create cost savings as a single sheet of ice costs the same to create as multiple sheets. Metric Giles stated that communities of color historically don't participate in ice activities. Could some be converted to roller rinks? Committee discussed other potential uses of arena facilities; dry floor events, concerts, roller skating, etc. Other municipalities will be watching closely to see what solutions Ramsey County comes up with. The committee has requested more information.

**PROPOSED 2016-17 FEES** – tabled to October 14<sup>th</sup> meeting

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- **ADA Plan Update** – process is moving along well. An update/report should be available by year-end. A review will be added to the November agenda.
- **Bike and Ped Plan Update** – Plan will be finished at end of October and will be online with the conversion of the new Ramsey County website.
- **First Tee Fundraisers** – October 12 is the "History Meets the Future" golf event at The Town & Country Club in Saint Paul. Proceeds will be donated to The Frist Tee of Saint Paul.
- **Outdoor Recreation Programmer** – Position closed on 9/10/15 – currently there are 100 applications
- **Rice Creek Trail** – Bids came in \$400,000 more than budgeted. Costs of concrete, asphalt and boardwalk accounted for higher costs.
- **Community Engagement Intern** – Intern starts in September.
- **Tuj Lub Groundbreaking** – September 16, 5:00 p.m. at Keller Regional Park – Golfview picnic area. Construction begins in spring 2016.
- **Tamarack Nature Center Early Learning Center Grand Opening** – September 23, 2:30 p.m.
- **Vadnais Sports Center Open House** – October 15, 3:00 to 8:00 p.m.

### **REPORT FROM THE CHAIR AND OTHER COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Chair and commission members had no report at this time.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Rich Straumann moved, Kong Vang seconded that the meeting be adjourned at 8:24 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Sharon Chute