

## RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MNUTES

March 9, 2022 – 6:00 PM

VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

**Commission Members:** Chair - Gregory Williams (AL), Leah Shepard (AL), Michael Berger (1), Jordan Nelson (2), Vice chair - Brian Tempas (3), Metric Giles (4), Savannah Lane (5), Snowdon Herr (6), Candy Petersen (7)

**Notice:** Due to the ongoing health pandemic, particularly because of the delta variant, as Chair of the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation Commission, I have determined that an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent. In compliance with Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.021, subdivision 1, as the Commission meets via Zoom, we state for the record that all members of the Commission are able to hear one another and all discussion and testimony, as can members of the public. Also, because of the ongoing health pandemic, it is unfeasible for at least one Commission member, chief legal counsel, or County staff to be physically present in the regular meeting room. All votes by Commission members will be conducted by roll call.

*The meeting was called to order by Chair, Greg Williams at 6:04pm. Snowden Her motioned to approve the February 9, 2022, Meeting Minutes and to accept the March 9, 2022, Agenda; Jordan Nelson seconded and Motion carried.*

### **Parks Ordinance Revision Update: Mark McCabe**

County Board adopted the revised park ordinance on February 22, 2022, with the Fines and Penalties Request for Board Action also passing on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Mark recapped the high-level changes that were proposed and thanked everyone for their work. The revised ordinance can be viewed here:

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/content/updated-park-ordinance>

### **State of the Parks Presentation: Mark McCabe & Gregory Williams**

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, Greg presented the annual State of the Parks report to the County Board. Mark reported that it was very well received by the board. Greg thanked everyone in the parks department that pulled the report together as it was a true team effort. One highlight was that 70% of the staff made in into work even during high COVID times. The County Board had overall very positive feedback for Parks as well as the excellent presentation done by Greg. The Presentation can be watched here:

[https://ramseycountymn.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=1&clip\\_id=795](https://ramseycountymn.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=1&clip_id=795)

### **Open Position Updates/Seasonal Hiring: Mark McCabe**

As mentioned last meeting, Parks had 4 open Maintenance & Operations positions that represented an opportunity to continue to add more racial diversity to Parks & Recreation. A temporary maintenance worker that is a person of color was also hired for the season. Tamarack nature center is currently interviewing for the Office Manager position and has also attracted a moderate number of diverse candidates. Applicants for the Director of Arenas & Golf Courses had good gender diversity but not racial diversity. The one finalist that was a person of color was offered another position and declined further interviews.

*Metric Giles appreciated the movement towards equity and would like to make sure numbers are reported to show the movement toward balance of diversity in the work force.* Mark agreed and reported that Parks is still approximately 30% away from being representative of the Ramsey County Population and would need to hire 30 more employees to hit that goal.

Seasonal staffing postings are out and offer good opportunities to provide Parks experience with maintenance crews, Soil & Water, Lifeguard and Lead Lifeguard positions.

Greg asked for details on the temp worker that accepted since Greg was on the interview panel. (Calab) Greg also commented that the intent, focus and conversation around equity was unparalleled and yielded the best results. Leah Shepard asked for demographic changes over time across Ramsey County staffing and other methods and their results. Savannah Lane asked about if the reporting breaks out by roles. (yes) Brian Tempas asked if the interviews were virtual or in person. (Virtual due to mask mandate).

**Work force statistics report: page 42**

<https://ramseynet.us/sites/default/files/Strategic%20Team/Human%20Resouces/Workforce%20Statistics%20Year-End%202020%208.2.21%20v2.pdf>

**2021 Performance Measures: Page 9**

<https://ramseynet.us/sites/default/files/Strategic%20Team/Policy%20%26%20Planning/2020.08.01-Collated%20EGCI%20Performance%20Measures%20Forms.pdf>

Recent consolidations in Fleet, HR and Finance has made comparisons a bit more challenging.

**Racial Equity Work: West Side Community Engagement Meeting Update**

On March 8, 2022, Parks was in attendance at a WSCO (West Side Community Organization) meeting. There was a wide range of ages of community members and Parks was able to review the different scenarios for the West Side Arena. The main theme seemed to be a desire to have more access to the facility with open/free skate, off season use for farmers market and community events. *Leah felt that it was also well received but the jam board was not that well used and is looking forward to seeing the results.* Mike Goodnature reported that many people were not even aware what the building is used for.

**Parks Commission Open Applications: Angie Marlette**

Currently District 3 is the only position open for appointment. It will be posted in April with an appointment in May since the position expires in June. Please email if you need a reminder of when your appointment expires.

**Natural Resource Manager Update: Mike Goodnature**

- Conservation Corps Update 2021 Review and 2022 Forecast
  - Four-person crew for summer 2022 with funding from Parks & Trail Legacy fund
    - Generally, the crews are just graduating high school and are recruited through the schools
  - Will be assisting with projects from Tamarack nature center to buckthorn removal, spring burns and planting projects
- Winter Tree Removal and Associated Restoration Projects
  - While Ramsey County is small there is over 6500 acres of natural parkland with the majority of restoration work that is funded through DNR grants
  - Battle Creek Tree removal has generated some public concern however the trees removed are not native or appropriate for Oak Savannah or native prairie
    - Mike explained the history of the site and historical evidence pointing towards this type of restoration
- Ash Tree Replacement Program was drafted and not that funding has been secured with the Tree Trust the first 400 ash trees have been replaced with another 400 left.

**Soil & Water Conservation Work Plans: Ann White Eagle**

- Well Sealing Grant: ¼ revenue of Soil & Water is from grants such as the Well Sealing grant from the Clean Water Fund. It was the most successful of the state due to the number of unsealed wells in the county. Any areas that rely on ground water for drinking water, need to have wells sealed to prevent contamination.

- Grant and Local Capacity & Buffer Law grants: Annual grant from the Board of Water and Soil resources. This grant supplies funding for Education, Outreach, Public Forums, Staff Training as well as funding seasonal staff hired with a focus on increasing diversity in these careers. Other local capacity grants to fund pollinator gardens. The Buffer Law Grant, while small, works to protect public waters and currently in Ramsey County all parcels are compliant.
- Reminder about upcoming events at TNC and future forums

#### **Commission Chair Update: Greg Williams**

- Greg reviewed the Strategic Plan for the Parks Commission and reviewed the history, authorities and duties given as an advisory body.
- The formation of a Community Engagement Sub-Committee would take a deeper dive in to successful strategies that would increase community engagement, equity and diversity by examining ideas, conducting research and using Best Management Practices inside and outside the county.
  - The sub-committee would meet via zoom or in an outdoor setting outside the normal meeting time
  - All Commission members are asked to complete a quick survey and shared a survey QR code

#### **Director Update**

- With the lowered transmission and infection rate of COVID19, in person meetings will need to resume to be able to meet state statues required for public meetings, confirming if this will happen in April or May.
- Maggie Dreon has been working to reach out to non-users of the Parks system to determine barriers to using the parks, any contacts that the commission can share would be appreciated. *Leah asked if contacts from the Westside Engagement will be used.* While it can be shared it may not be as useful for this since there are no Ramsey County parks within St. Paul proper.

#### **Commission Member Update**

- Mike Berger was contacted by a district resident that wants give a tour of some of the Rice Creek trails

*A motion for adjournment was made by Leah Shepard, meeting adjourned at 7:21pm*

**Next Meeting:** April 13, 2022