

# RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

## COMMISSION MINUTES

September 12, 2018 at 6:00 pm

Parks & Recreation Administration Building

2015 Van Dyke St. Maplewood, MN 55109

Attending: Leah Shepard, Kong Vang, Metric Giles, Bryan Shirley, Melissa Wenzel and Gale Pederson

Not in Attendance: Candy Peterson, Louise Krohn and Brian Tempas

Staff: Mark McCabe and Angela Marlette

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Leah Shepard.

### **Approval of the Agenda:**

Gale motioned for approval of the September 12, 2018 agenda and Kong seconded  
*Motion carried*

### **Approval of the Minutes:**

A correction was made to the Park Tour Notes showing Bryan Shirley's attendance  
Kong moved for acceptance of the July 2018 minutes and it was seconded by Leah  
*Motion carried.*

### **Welcome Melissa Wenzel: Leah Shepard, Mark McCabe: Interim Director**

Melissa gave background on her concern for equity of trails and accessibility to the parks. Her experience includes being a community council member in District 1, a stormwater protector for her day job and a volunteer with Women on Bikes in St. Paul. Each commission member present introduced themselves and the district they represent.

Kong Vang: District 2 at-large, Little Canada, Board Member for 3 years

Leah Shepard: Chair and at-Large Member District 5, West side

Gale Pederson: District 2, has served the longest (13 years), Roseville area

Brian Shirley: District 5, 7 years serving

### **Performance Measures: Mark McCabe**

Ramsey County Performance Measure were previously known as Strategic Measures, which were the metrics of items the County was to be accountable for and have year over year review of. As the County was restructured there was a need to align strategic objectives across all departments. As a result of this each department has the same four Performance Measure Goals to create quantifiable actions around; Accountability, Opportunity, Prosperity and Wellbeing. Mark reviewed each of the four Parks & Recreation Performance Measures and explained the data behind those goals.

*Leah asked if the Accountability Performance measure mainly targets fiscal, programs or parks accountability. Mark responded that the targets outcomes of the goals are flexible and since this is the first year, ideally there will be future input from staff, commission, and the public on defining the goals. Ideally, the objectives stay somewhat consistent each year but there are needs the ability to make*

*changes as the value of objective is determined and new priorities* Mark commented in the near future to have Parks staff speak about outreach programming and how it fits into the Prosperity Performance measure. *KONG asked to definitions of CERT and SBE businesses.* SBE stands for Small Business Enterprise, CERT (Central Certification Program) is a list of vendors that are preapproved to work on projects with Ramsey County. *Kong asked if there is a reason to not use CERT.* There is no reason to not use CERT since the vendors have been vetted. The County has set procurement guidelines which make the use of the CERT list a valuable resource. *Leah asked if there is an ultimate goal, in percent, of the use of SBE's.* Initially, some departments were doing nothing in regards to using SBE's. In time, the data will reveal a threshold of percent SBE's that is sustainable. The goal of 5% is appropriate but aggressive for a beginning number. Mark offered to share some of the other performance measures from other service teams such as libraries. *Leah asked what the intended audience, internal or external.* While these do go to the county board and report progress to them, the public does have access, but it's more of an internal strategic plan and accountability document. These plans are reviewed near the end of the first quarter since that is when the final data from the previous year is available.

#### **Volunteer Hours Tracking: Angela Marlette**

Angie will be reaching out to the Commission Members for any other committees or events they volunteer their time with for tracking purposes. Leah is involved with the ADA transition meeting and Candy with First tee. Mark elaborated that Ramsey County has volunteers all over the place and the County does a report at the end of the year on how much volunteer service is done and relates it back to costs saved. This is big benefit to the County and an investment the community is making into county resources. Gale commented that this is similar to what the City of Roseville does.

#### **Winter Recreation Discussion/Snow making: Mark McCabe**

The initiative to make snow at Battle Creek has been going on for quite a while. Battle Creek offers world class cross country ski trails. It is a Homologated course which means that the courses are certified by the International Ski Federation. A world class race can be held if the snow availability is predictable and the ability to make snow makes this a necessity. Many schools have been unable to practice because of the unpredictable snow conditions. A group of dedicated cross country ski constituents (including Ahvo Taipale), local organizations, local school groups and Ramsey County have worked for a number of years trying to get bonding money for the project with no success. The County had been willing to put up a \$1.1M match and asked the State for a \$2.2M match with the remaining \$1.1M to be raised by the constituent group. Now the project has been re-scoped to have snow making, but with less amenities. The \$2.2M new project includes snow making infrastructure for 3 kilometer loop, equipment storage building and a snow hill for tubing and snowboarding (revenue driver). The request is to ask Ramsey County for \$1.2M and utilize legacy fund for \$500,000 and raise \$700,000 privately. This is the request moving forward since the board would need to re-approve the money Ramsey County is putting forward. The request for Legacy funds was submitted with no issues. The constituent group is identifying private donors and Mark is working with legal to set up a holding area for privately donated monies. *Kong asked for clarification on the location of the ski areas.* It is near the recreation center to the left and the hill near there. There would need to be operational money for the on-going cost. *Bryan asked if this is an update or is a vote needed.* No vote necessary as this is more of an update. The fee side could be an equity side issue since the county would not want to create any use barriers. Operationally, there would need to be funding from somewhere. *Bryan asked if Parks sought guidance from the Como area since they are doing something similar.* Yes, as well as Elm creek since it was a closer representation to what Ramsey County is doing. *Kong expresses a concern that a fee for use of the hill would prevent neighborhood kids from using it. However, if there is a way to shift some of that revenue back to the neighborhood or make work so the kids are not pushed out.*

*Melissa added to this and said it's definitely a draw and input from the community is needed for such a hard shift. Melissa asked for a timeline for this rollout. Funding availability is contingent upon that stakeholder group's ability to raise money. Until this point the direction from the County Board is that the project cannot go forward until the private money is raised. Metric asked about the process for approval and what role the Commission members play in its approval. The process is not as straightforward since this project was previously approved and not a new project, but re-scoped. But when there are concerns brought forth by the community, there is an obligation to share that with the County Board, which in turn is obligated to respond. Ramsey County has always wanted to not have fees in parks. In this case, the operational costs means that revenue would need to somehow be generated. Perhaps the concern to be brought to the County Board is to be less about fees and more about the concern from the Parks Commission regarding access, barriers and equity with in the community, given that a fee structure seems to be needed to make this work. Perhaps, this needs to be on next month's agenda for Mark to come back with an answer. Gale said it would be in the Commission's best interest to bring those answers back once you have received them from the Board, especially now since racial equity and neighborhood kids are in the equation. Leah assumes that there would be a robust community engagement process. Mark elaborated on the multitude of community members that have been involved in this process from all areas of park use. Bryan was surprised that the county attorneys signed off on a tubing hill considering the liability concerns are what prevents most other cities from having sanctioned tubing areas.*

#### **Items from Park Tour: Mark McCabe**

Mark thanked the members that were able to attend and asked if there were any comments or suggestions. *Kong was unable to attend and asked what was learned from the part of the tour at Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park. It was a new development and the process of funding as well as comparing prior use to current use. The main reason for the visit was that it was an area that had little development and use and was changed through this big intuitive. There are similarities to what is being explored for Pigs Eye Lake area development and use. Leah added that it was an example of what a Regional park can look like in the county and what can be done with \$6M. Metric would like to have a better understanding interactions of different systems in regard to the Watershed Districts, their funding and the areas of the work they do. Changes to the current Ramsey County Watershed District were reviewed and the changes that brought them into Ramsey County as a Division. This would be a good future agenda item for the Commission meeting.*

#### **Metropolitan Regional Parks Policy Plan Update: Mark McCabe**

Every four years the MET Council is required to complete a comprehensive review of this plan. The public still has the opportunity to make comments on the plan and the update items. Jon was in agreement with what they were putting forward regarding the full plan and spoke to County Commissioners regarding it. He was a regular attender to the MET Council meetings. Mark reviewed the six points from the MET Council Policy Plan update. *Leah pointed out that the second point was removed and then placed back in and could be vulnerable for removal in the future. In the full plan it states that "The toolkit may be used, on occasion, to reprioritize the list of capital projects as submitted by the agencies for state and regional bonds and other funding sources as appropriate and allowable." Having this statement present in the plan ensures accountability to using the Equity toolkit. It is important to Ramsey County that these types of policies are in place in order to embed equity into everyday structure and not have use of the equity tools left up to the choices of individuals. Leah would like a motion to send her edited and prepared letter from the Parks Commission to the MET Council as part of the public comment. Metric will support anything that moves it beyond just intention and into action and further having something institutionalized in the policies. Leah handed out the letter and explained that the current language is fairly weak and the letter asks not only that it be kept but also*

strengthened. Discussion continued on the updates around the differences with Legacy Funding. Those that are passionate should also submit their own comments directly to the MET Council. Metric stated the letter can be used as a template for individual use. Leah noted that one of the reasons the language was to be removed is that it was cumbersome for implementing agencies. It was not seen this way by leadership of Parks & Recreation and this letter will go to show that the Commission will support Parks & Recreation in the use of the Equity Toolkit.

*Motion on the floor by Metric Giles is to approve the submission on the letter as the body of the Ramsey County Parks & Recreation Commission, including the correction of typos as deemed appropriate by Leah, to The Metropolitan Council, seconded by Gale.*

*Motion carried unanimously.*

Metric requests a follow-up that the letter was submitted.

There is a public input session on Sept 17<sup>th</sup>, at 4:30pm.

Equity Grant Program would be specifically applied for by agencies to be used on specific equitable programs and initiatives. More information is needed regarding since this program is not fully formed. Leah hopes that it does not let people off the hook since every public dollar should be used equitably.

### **Parks and Trails Legacy Fund Request: Mark McCabe**

Mark reviewed the funding and that every two years Parks submits the request of how to spend the Legacy fund dollars. While there is no say on the amount of allocation, we need to designate specifically where the funds will go. Some of the items are for long term/next phases of projects and others are for on-going community outreach programs. Mark recommended that a few of those people coordinating these programs and forming partnerships come to speak to the Commission, specifically Ken Pelto and Melanie Harding.

*Leah asked, how priority ranking is determined.* Personnel items are placed towards the top after that the goal is to leverage when other funding is available (through partnerships or other grants) to assist in completing the projects. Just because something is ranked higher or lower, they will all be completed.

*Metric asked how the amount of \$125K is determined. How these percentages are arrived at.* There is a formula for how the money is to be programmed out and we will have that allocation percent sent to the Commission. It is predetermined from the State Legacy. *Metric asked if an impact assessment is done and wants the \$125K to be an investment.* No there is not an impact assessment done. Mark commented that all the dollars are allocated as the Legacy is intended to do. There is a higher percentage allocated to infrastructure, development, and procurement. This allocation structure comes from the state. We are currently in the 8/9<sup>th</sup> year of the 25year amendment that was voted on.

### **Joint Meeting with Surrounding Cities: Leah Shepard, Mark McCabe**

The White Bear Lake Park Advisory Commission have responded to having a joint meeting on Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

The motion on the floor by Leah is to have a meeting on Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup> at the White Bear City Hall at 6:30pm in lieu of the regularly scheduled meeting of Wednesday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Seconded by Kong, *motion carries.*

Leah will reach out to their chair to create an agenda that is mutually productive. *Agenda Items Can Include; Bruce Vento, Zebra Mussels, Lake Links Trail, Ice Arenas, Partnership with White Bear Lake School Tamarack, Off-Leash Plan, Golf System Plan. The goal is get to understand what they are up to and how we can collaborate.*

*Metro asked what the partnerships we currently have with White Bear.* Mark outlined just a few and Leah commented that it can be discussed at the October meeting.

*Gale and Bryan explained that these meetings started just a few years ago with the purpose of discussing current and future collaborations as well as financial and racial equity. It's nice for Ramsey County to know what other cities are doing with their park and recreation departments. Different cities are picked*

*each year. Past visits have been Maplewood, Arden Hills and Roseville. It would be nice to do one or two a year most especially with St. Paul Parks and Recreation since there are lots of things we can discuss with relation to equity and infrastructure. It has been difficult to secure a meeting with St. Paul in the past. Bryan commented that a chair exchange could be a way to gain the same information. Kong suggested 2-3 members sit in on different cities meetings in lieu of the Commission meeting and then report back.*

#### **Interim Director's Report: Mark McCabe**

Mark wanted to thank the Commission members for their participation tonight and throughout the year. Mark gave an update on the process to find a new Director by the end of October. There are some very good candidates. Leah assured the Commission that there are some good candidates as she was able to participate in parts of the process, but it is still currently confidential. Golf System Plan consultant was met today. The consultant will attend a board workshop on October 9, 2018 to discuss some of the findings. There is also a workshop on the Vadnais Dome on October 9, 2018 regarding the different options available based on utilization, feasibility, and future goals. Operationally, seasonal park reservations are ramping down and ice arenas ramping up, the staff are now transitioning over. Jon's retirement party was a great event with family, staff, colleagues and commissioners in attendance. Jon was very appreciative of the program.

#### **Report from Chair and Other Commission Members**

Leah reported that the ADA transition plan team is looking at moving to quarterly meeting as a draft plan has been completed. Kong updated the commission that he is moving to Washington County and is committed to serving through the end of calendar year. The At-Large position has been posted by the County Managers office to seek a replacement. Metric would like supply the names of those guests that he brought to the Park Tour and have that reflected in the tour notes. There is a Racism Conference on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018. He would like to see Ramsey County to consider paying for commission members to attend these conferences. He will send more information. Kong asked if staff is sent to these conferences. Mark commented that the county has internal racial equity training.

#### **Draft Agenda for October 10, 2018 Meeting: Leah Shepard**

The Commission members reviewed October's draft agenda. Overall census was that no more items needed to be added to the agenda.

Leah asked for a motion to adjourn, Gale motioned.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:56pm

**Next Meeting: Parks & Recreation Admin Building**  
Wednesday, October 10, 2018