

Approved

**CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS  
DAKOTA COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

**PARKS AND RECREATION MEETING**

**May 13, 2008**

The May 2008 meeting of the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, May 13, 2008, in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, 1101 Victoria Curve. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M.

The following Commissioners were present: Paul Portz, Larry Craighead, Ray Morris, Tom Kraus, Michael Toth, Maureen Brackey and Liz O'Brien. Staff present were: Guy Kullander, Parks Operations and Project Coordinator, Jake Sedlacek, Assistant to the City Administrator, Teresa Gangelhoff, Recreation Programmer, and Nancy Bauer, Recording Secretary.

**MINUTES:**

The minutes were approved with corrections.

Commissioner Morris made a motion to approve the minutes with corrections, seconded by Commissioner O'Brien.

**AYES           7**  
**NAYES         0**

**RECREATION PROGRAMMER'S REPORT**

Ms. Gangelhoff said she is looking for volunteers for the June 7<sup>th</sup> Parks Celebration. Events have been added to June 6<sup>th</sup>. There will be the skateboard series at Rogers Lake Park which is a competition for skateboarders. At the Village there will be the movie Shrek on a big screen projector. Sage Market is sponsoring the band "The Swamp Kings". On the 7<sup>th</sup> there is a 5k in the morning and the celebration is noon to 3:00 P.M. at Mendakota Park. The Fire Department is sponsoring a street dance and bbq in the evening. All information is in the Heights Highlites and on the City's website. Tennis programs are filling and a fourth class was added. The generation's tea went very well. There were 76 participants at the tea on Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup>. Registrations are being taken for youth trips. Summer performances are listed on the website. The fishing derby is almost full.

Chair Portz commented that last year was the best for turnout at the parks celebration. The year before was the 50<sup>th</sup> celebration with the dance in the evening at the Mendota Plaza which was packed.

Ms. Gangelhoff responded that most events are free except the 5k, summer series, Fire Relief Association BBQ and street dance. The area businesses have donated funds and really help out by sponsoring events.

Commissioner O'Brien asked how the chaperoning works for youth trips.

*Approved*

Ms. Gangelhoff responded that she is a chaperone and it depends on how many kids go. For the water park trips it is 5 kids per chaperone. For land trips where they are walking around it is 7-8 kids per chaperone. The former rec programmer for West Saint Paul is a chaperone and if needed a high school student will help chaperone.

### **Comprehensive Plan Update**

Mr. Sedlacek reported that last month the comprehensive plan was discussed at the meeting because it is being updated. Commissioner Morris and Commissioner Kraus were willing to come in and go through written comments. No written comments have been submitted yet. Mr. Kullander has gone through the plan and marked up his copy. The real basic changes have been done. Comments are still being accepted. The City Council has set up a joint workshop with the Planning Commission on May 20, 2008. The official public hearing is May 27<sup>th</sup> at the Planning Commission meeting to discuss changes to the comprehensive plan. Both meetings are at 7:30 P.M. The latest draft should come from the planner tomorrow. The goal is to have it updated by the end of the year. The questions to think about are what are the impact of parks and trails on the community. The language in the old plan talks about how important these are to the community and balance amenities with cost effectiveness. That goal might not change but we might want to change some of the verbiage. If anyone has any feedback get it to Mr. Kullander or myself or attend one of the meetings mentioned.

Chair Portz asked if the plan represents the total amount of open space such as Pilot Knob, school property or parks.

Mr. Sedlacek responded that there different ways greens space is tallied. One is tallying all open space that includes cemeteries, all school land, state park land, City parks and Pilot Knob. There is also a tally of just park land.

Chair Portz responded that it would be a good idea to get a whole picture of the parks.

Commissioner Kraus asked if there was a facility chart of the park land in the City. It was also discussed at the last meeting to get an electronic copy of the plan.

Mr. Sedlacek responded that an electronic copy was not provided by the City Planner.

Mr. Kullander passed out a Park Facility chart and trail map to the Commissioners which was last updated in July of 2007.

Chair Portz said Commissioners can submit their comments to Mr. Sedlacek by next Tuesday.

### **Par 3**

Mr. Sedlacek reported that April was not a great month for golf. In 2005, there were 29 days for playing, in 2006, 22 days for playing, in 2007, 19 days for playing and in 2008, there were only 10 days suitable for play. There was actually a snow out day this year. While there was not a detailed report, Mr. Sedlacek reported that there was \$4,500 in operating revenue (green fees, concessions and rentals) for April. There was \$2,270 in operating expenses which includes only one payroll. While these numbers look good, there will be three payrolls in May.

Chair Portz reported that he stopped at the Par 3 one night and it was packed. The parking lot and street were full of cars. Mr. Sedlacek said that there are leagues playing Monday nights. Tuesday

*Approved*

and Thursday nights are booked from right after school until dusk. The women's league will be starting in June on Wednesday nights.

A new improvement at the Par 3 is a rain garden that was installed last week. It collects rainfall runoff to keep it out of the City's storm water system. There is no cost to the Par 3 for the rain garden because Dakota County provided a grant and engineering is installing the garden. Commissioner Morris said it is an ecological way to collect wastewater, pretty to look at and low maintenance. It does reduce the amount of water runoff.

Mr. Sedlacek reported that the construction at the Par 3 is being held up due to control issues. Hopefully the work will be done by Father's day. The contractor is concerned about what will be found under the siding. If there are problems under the siding it could hold up the construction.

Chair Portz asked if the attorneys and contractors were aware that the Commission didn't want the construction to interfere with the golf season. Mr. Sedlacek responded that they were.

Mr. Sedlacek said he met with Mr. Murphy and discussed the trees at the Par 3. Thursday Mr. Murphy will submit a proposal for shade trees for the patio and screening for the 9<sup>th</sup> hole. All the lawnmowers are running which is good news. The greens committee met and discussed what their role will be and some of the priorities for the Par 3. The committee will get homework done for marketing, fee analysis, tournaments, beautification and promotions and make recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Commission. Another goal for the committee would be to maximize revenue while balancing the community asset. One of their first tasks will be making a recommendation for the color of the siding.

Commissioner O'Brien asked who was on the greens committee.

Mr. Sedlacek responded that it was Chair Portz, Commissioner Krause, former Chair Spicer and Annette Patient.

Chair Portz said anybody that wants to join the committee is welcome.

Commissioner Craighead said that the maintenance shed should have another coat of stain because it looks bad on the south side. Mr. Sedlacek said he would put it on the to do list. He then brought up the gathering at the Par 3 that was discussed at the last meeting. Would the Commission like to invite the other Commissioners to the gathering?

Chair Portz said the purpose of the picnic is to socialize and take advantage of an amenity in the community. Other Commissioners, Council and City staff would be welcome. How would we find out if others would be interested in coming?

Mr. Sedlacek said he could ask the Commissioners and Council.

Chair Portz said he thought Saturday mornings were slow at the Par 3. Maybe start at 9:00, eat at 11:30 and be done by 1:00.

Chair Portz suggested starting tee times at 9:30 with an hours worth of tee times. If people don't want to golf they can still come and socialize.

*Approved*

Mr. Sedlacek said some dates should be picked to see who can attend and pick the date for the biggest group of people.

Commissioner Craighead suggested a potluck. Chair Portz said that was a good idea and would keep it simple.

The dates suggested were June 21<sup>st</sup>, July 12<sup>th</sup> and July 26<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Brackey asked if families were included.

Commissioner Craighead suggested that it include families.

Chair Portz asked Mr. Sedlacek to contact the other Commissioners and Councilmembers.

Chair Portz said the potential Saturdays are picked, it will be family oriented and should be a good time.

### **Open Space and Trail Opportunities for the Mendota Plaza Redevelopment**

Chair Portz reported that the Planning Commission and City Council has been putting a lot of work in the planning of the Mendota Plaza redevelopment. There are trail and park aspects to the plan that will be presented to the Commission.

Mr. Sedlacek said the redevelopment being discussed is at Highway 110, Dodd Road, the Mendota Plaza building and the Village development. The Planning Commission and City Council has been working with the developer, Paster Enterprises, to redevelop the site. One of the issues that has been a concern for the Council is the ditch drainage way through the site. Paster Enterprises wants to remove an existing portion of the building and move the tenants. Walgreens is interested in the site. There will be retail shops along Highway 110 with some restaurants. Paster Enterprises wants to fill in the wetlands and the drainage ditch. The Council feels strong about keeping open space on the site. Paster Enterprises feels that to make the site work for the redevelopment the wetlands must be filled in.

Commissioner Morris asked if the wetlands legally could be filled in.

Mr. Sedlacek responded that Paster Enterprises could buy a wetland credit. They would fill in the site and build a wetland elsewhere in the County. The local government agency has to agree to it. Dakota County Physical Development Department said the wetland is an amenity and it would be a crime not to do something with it. Paster Enterprises has made an application for a land use decision to the City Council and the City Council sent it back to the Planning Commission to address a number of issues, including open space on the site. The City Council was wondering if the Parks and Recreation Commission, being an advisory committee, had any feedback on how important this property is to the parks and trail system as a natural resource or a trail connection.

Mr. Sedlacek continued that the County is looking at how to connect the greenway open spaces in the County. The parcel to the County is a critical link to a couple of open spaces. It is a greenway on the County map for 2030. It connects Valley Park, Dodge Nature Center, and Friendly Marsh Park.

Commissioner Morris said that Dodge Nature Center does not have access to their site. Some of the parking at the shopping center could be used to access the nature center.

*Approved*

Commissioner Kraus asked if Dodge Nature Center would want public access to their site.

Commissioner Morris said this would be a good opportunity to open dialogue regarding this issue. They have been increasing visitor amenities to the area.

Commissioner Kraus agreed that it would be good to check with Dodge Nature Center as to their future plans.

Mr. Sedlacek responded that Olivia Dodge is removing herself from the Dodge Nature Center and Dakota County is working on a conservation easement over the site with funding coming from the foundation which will make it an open nature center as opposed to a closed nature center. The County will have more say over the site.

Commissioner Morris said the nature center is a unique resource within the metro area and should have more access.

Commissioner Craighead said the segment of trail by the shopping center just ends and doesn't see how a trail can go through the site. It would not serve a purpose unless it was going to the nature center or the Friendly Hills Marsh Park.

Commissioner Kraus said if the wetland was preserved as open space he could see having a trail through there and not the parking space.

Commissioner Craighead said the bike trail on Dodd Road needs to be made safer.

Commissioner O'Brien asked if the Council is getting any feedback from the community regarding the redevelopment.

Mr. Sedlacek said the feedback is people are excited about getting the shopping center cleaned up. Don't slow up the process and let's get it done. Dodge Nature Center hasn't given a strong commitment for or against it. They have talked to the developer.

Commissioner Kraus asked if a study has been done regarding the water flow through the site.

Mr. Sedlacek said that grading over the existing ditch and piping it would maintain the current water flow through the site. There would be a storm water pond built on the site around the monument sign that would collect the runoff water from the development.

Commissioner Kraus asked about the size of the pond.

Mr. Sedlacek said he didn't know, but the developer would work with engineering to figure out the storm water calculations. MnDOT would give feedback also because emergency overflows would flow into MnDOT's storm water ponds.

Commissioner Morris said this is an opportunity to clean up the retail site that is not as attractive as across the street and gives an option to use Friendly Marsh Park. If it could be worked out with Dodge Nature Center, this would be the opportunity to give good access to their park and ours. Friendly Marsh Park is one of the top five largest parks in the Mendota Heights park system.

Commissioner Kraus asked if there was any wildlife value to the wetland.

*Approved*

Mr. Sedlacek said he didn't know if that has been studied. Dakota County says it's a valuable amenity to the green space.

Commissioner Morris asked for the size of the creek.

Mr. Kullander said it was about two or three acres. It would be a significant visual impact to fill it in. It was a man made wetland.

Commissioner Morris said the wetlands is attractive and used by wildlife. It would be a perfect place to put a trailhead.

Commissioner O'Brien asked if the grading over of the wetlands did not get done would the rest of the development go?

Mr. Sedlacek responded not exactly. The City Council would like to see a cluster of buildings on the site with a greenway in the middle. The developer feels that each planned restaurant needs its own parking.

Mr. Sedlacek summarized that what he is hearing from the Commission is that trails are important and may not be a need. The site is recognized as a natural greenway even if a trail doesn't fit on the site. There is some value to the greenway aspect.

Commissioner Craighead said when the village area was done they made sure there were walking ways through the village area, so you are not on top of cars wherever you are walking. The shopping center should be made pedestrian friendly not just car friendly.

Chair Portz said it was a good informational update with lots of good comments.

Mr. Kullander reported that the developer has put up some lath with flags to show the building corners closest to 110 that Commissioners may want to look at.

Commissioner Morris asked if there would be access off Highway 110.

Mr. Sedlacek said there would be a right in - right out on Highway 110.

## **Verbal Updates**

Mr. Kullander showed a prototype sign that is being designed for the Pilot Knob site. Two interpretative signs are being worked on; the signs need to be put in by June 30<sup>th</sup> because of the Great River Greening grant had an installation deadline. The sign has to be in English and Dakota with a maximum of 250 words per sign.

Commissioner Morris asked if the sign would be glass embedded.

Mr. Kullander responded that the signs are laminated on heavy duty aluminum panels and are three feet wide. They won't be installed in their final locations to avoid damage while work on the site continues.

*Approved*

Commissioner Craighead said the signs on the River Trail haven't been vandalized since they have been put in.

Mr. Kullander responded that those signs are cast bronze. Those signs are very expensive. The planned signs for Pilot Knob are going to evolve and made as sturdy as possible. The signs will be put on a maintenance schedule to be checked and replaced as needed.

### **Commission Comments**

Commissioner Toth reported that he attended the Mendota Heights Athletic Association meeting in April and introduced himself and invited the Association to attend Parks and Recreation meetings.

Commissioner Craighead asked if Mendota Heights Athletic Association have found a solution to their storage or rental issues.

Commissioner Toth said they continue storing some of their stuff in the building by the water tower but still need more storage space.

Chair Portz said that the sesquicentennial has started. The Sunday paper had a two page activity list. The wagon train went through Mendota Heights to the capital last weekend. Fort Snelling has a number of activities going on this summer.

Commissioner Craighead commented that he saw the wagon train on Sunday it was fun to see.

Mr. Sedlacek reported that this year's spring clean up went very well. It was held Saturday the 3<sup>rd</sup>. There were 270 counted residents officially, the second largest ever; a lot of uncounted folks went to the electronics side only. Unofficially it was the largest spring clean up ever. \$1,500 was collected to help defray the costs. One packer truck was absolutely full at 25,000 lbs. Four 20 yard dumpsters were filled with miscellaneous junk. Two 30 yard dumpsters were filled with scrap metal (10,000 lbs). There was a semi filled with electronics.

Mr. Sedlacek has been approached by some Commissioners who would like the Commission to think about holding a workshop, maybe off camera, to discuss funding decisions and recreation programming. He also suggested Commissioners think about what other topics they would like discussed at the workshop.

Chair Portz said the workshop would be a good idea and asked if Ms. Gangelhoff would be in attendance.

Mr. Sedlacek responded that she would be attending.

Commissioner Kraus said it sounded like a good idea.

Commissioner Toth remarked that he noticed the new ag-lime warning track at Hagstrom King Park ball field.

Commissioner Morris made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Kraus seconded the motion.

**Ayes: 7**  
**Nays 0**

*Approved*

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 P.M.