

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

**PARKS AND RECREATION MEETING**

**November 13, 2007**

The November 2007 meeting of the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, November 13, 2007, 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: Chair Richard Spicer, Commissioners Tom Kraus, Paul Portz, Raymond Morris and Missy Hicky. Absent was Commissioner Larry Craighead. City Staff present were; Guy Kullander, Operations and Projects Coordinator, Jake Sedlacek, Assistant to the City Administrator, and Nancy Bauer, Recording Secretary. City Staff absent was Teresa Gangelhoff, Recreation Programmer.

**MINUTES:**

A motion to approve the October 9, 2007, minutes was made by Commissioner Morris and seconded by Commissioner Portz.

**AYES 5**

**NAYS 0**

**PARK REPORT**

Chair Spicer reported that Recreation Programmer Teresa Gangaehoff is working on a holiday brochure to take to schools. There is bowling and a movie on December 27<sup>th</sup>. There are new holiday programs with the cities of West St. Paul and South St. Paul. Gymnastic classes start on January 12<sup>th</sup>. There are 25 children in cheerleading for ages 4 and up. The second session starts on February 4<sup>th</sup>. Learn to skate registrations are now being taken at City Hall. There are 55<sup>+</sup> programs with the cities of South St. Paul and Inver Grove Heights. The NURT trail constructed by Dakota County is done along Highway 110 and looks nice.

Mr. Kullander responded most of the trail work is done. City crews will plow and maintain this new segment.

Chair Spicer continued with the Park Report saying that the ice rinks will be open soon, weather permitting. The plan is to open the rinks on December 15<sup>th</sup>.

**COUNCIL ACTION**

Chair Spicer reported that the City Council approved the playground equipment replacement at Rogers Lake Park. He asked if the Parks and Recreation funding recommendation of \$5,000

*Approved*

from the Park Maintenance Budget, \$26,500 from Special Park Fund and \$26,500 from the Cell Tower Fund was approved.

Mr. Kullander responded that the City Council approved the Parks and Recreation Commission's recommendation.

Chair Spicer said that the Parks and Recreation Commission recommended a backstop and outfield fencing at Hagstrom-King Park and City Council approved the concept plan. Council wants to get a bid for the fence for a fence fabric in either galvanized or clad.

Mr. Kullander responded that the City Council approved the concept of the plan at Hagstrom-King Park, but would like the Parks and Recreation Commission to invite the neighbors to an information open house for input in February. One resident voiced an opinion that they did not want to look at an ugly fence and Council wanted their input into the type of fence it would be whether it is galvanized, green clad or a black clad fence. The price would be the about the same for any of the fence types.

Chair Spicer asked if the funding was approved for 50% out of Special Park Funds and 50% out of Cell Tower Funds.

Mr. Kullander responded the plan was approved in concept. Once there are firm figures and public input the plan would be taken back to the City Council with the Parks and Recreation Commission recommendation for funding for consideration.

Chair Spicer reported that the Friendly Marsh Park field is a little premature because there are other improvements planned in the area.

Mr. Kullander responded that Mendota Shopping Center is looking to make improvements and the issues haven't been ironed out yet. It is being looking at to find another access point for the Friendly Marsh Park with any new improvements.

Chair Spicer asked if a motion was needed to hold the open house in February for the Rogers Lake Park and Hagstrom-King Park improvements.

Mr. Kullander responded no, that the Commission should direct staff to hold the open house. They should also direct staff to send out notices and publicize the open house inviting residents to attend for their input.

Chair Spicer asked the other Commissioners if they objected to holding the open house in February. All other Commissioners were in agreement.

### **“YOU ARE HERE” PARK SIGNS**

Chair Spicer asked the other Commissioners if they looked at the “You are Here” sign displayed outside of City Hall. Chair Spicer commented that the sign looked really nice.

*Approved*

Commissioner Portz commented that it looked nice.

Chair Spicer thanked Mr. Kullander for having the sign made up and that it looks terrific.

Mr. Kullander said he needed authorization from the Parks and Recreation Commission to approve the sign design, and to ask City Council to approve an expenditure of \$6,000 from the Special Park Fund to purchase the materials, and direct Public Works staff to assemble the signs in the winter months during their down time. Mr. Kullander estimates that 11 to 14 signs could be made with a budget of \$6,000.00.

Chair Spicer asked how many signs would be needed.

Mr. Kullander responded that a total would be 20-25 for all the parks and trail systems. Mendakota Park is a large park and the trail on Highway 13 and Wachtler would be a good place for a trail map. Over the next year sites would be picked and approved by the Commission as to where to put the signs and in future years ask for additional funding to make and install more signs.

Commissioner Morris made a motion to approve the design of the sign and approve the expenditure of up to \$6,000 from the Special Park Fund to make the signs.

Commissioner Kraus seconded the motion.

**AYES: 5**

**NAYS: 0**

Chair Spicer said that the quality of the signs is in keeping with what the Parks and Recreation Commission has done throughout the parks. It is a very high quality sign.

Mr. Kullander reported that Parks staff Terry Blum and John Boland designed the sign and assembled the sign.

## **PILOT KNOB PHASE 2 – MANAGEMENT AND RESTORATION PLAN**

Wiley Buck, the Restoration Ecologist of Great River Greening, presented a photo from a Seth Eastman painting that shows the Pilot Knob site in 1845. The painting helps show the soils and land survey of what was in the area at the time of the painting. Phase 2 area will be done in three separate blocks. It is preferred to do it this way because of the invasive species on the site. Communities included in the second phase are Mesic Prairie, Snag (wildlife tree), dry prairie, and Oak Savanna. Phase 2 is in better shape than Phase 1 because invasive species are not as wide spread and slopes are not as steep. There are a lot of invasive species on the south side of the site though. It is recommended that a couple of areas be off limits for a couple of years because seeds could be spread by people from the invasive species (spotted knapweed).

Mr. Todd Rexine of Great River Greening showed the trails and overlooks planned in the Pilot Knob 2 site.

Chair Spicer asked about the trails that meet in the parking area – how would they be affected if areas are closed off in the first three years.

Mr. Rexine responded that the parking area would be moved temporarily and the trail system would be focused on in Phase 1.

Chair Spicer asked if the two trails in the south would not be constructed for the first three years.

Mr. Rexine responded that was correct. The gathering area falls in the knapweed area that needs to be eradicated. A temporary space has been planned for a gathering area on the east side of the wooded area.

Chair Spicer asked what was proposed to keep people out of certain area.

Mr. Buck responded that fencing would be put up.

Mr. Rexine said ideas for a parking lot three years down the road would be at the corner of Acacia Drive and Pilot Knob Road and allow for a port-a-potty and six car parking. Larger boulders and stones would be used so vehicles could not drive off road. A gate would be put up at the north end of Pilot Knob Road to cut access off for vehicles. The trail system would be 4' wide with small boulders along the edge to push water off the trail. Potential designs for overlooks were shown. One is a sitting area with seven stones as in Phase 1 overlooking the river valley. The colored stones overlook to the north would be used at the Highway 55 overlook. The Garden Overlook would be in the middle of site. Both the colored stones and garden overlook would be representing the colors of the Mdewakanton colors of the shield for north, south east and west.

Commissioner Portz asked about emergency vehicles mentioned in the report.

Mr. Kullander said there would not be a road, but an access way for a medical emergency, etc.

Commissioner Portz said it was a good report and asked if a field trip could be planned to the site which would be educational and interesting.

Mr. Kullander responded he could forward literature to him to contact Great River Greening. Also, volunteers are needed to help at the site.

Commissioner Portz asked that the Commission be kept informed of volunteer opportunities so the Commission could help.

Commissioner Kraus asked when the site would be open to the public.

Mr. Kullander responded that the site technically would be open to the public immediately for people to walk the site except for certain areas where invasive species are being removed.

*Approved*

Commissioner Kraus asked when the trails would be put in.

Mr. Rexine responded that the gravel trails would be put in next year.

Mr. Kullander responded that once the trail was in it would connect to the Great River Trail along Highway 13.

Commissioner Kraus asked how soon signs would be put up and if signage would evolve over time to keep people out of certain places.

Mr. Kullander responded that signs would be put in almost immediately to identify the site. Other signs would be put in for information and tell people what is happening on the site.

Commissioner Morris said that the signs need to be checked regularly to make sure they aren't ripped down or defaced.

Mr. Kullander responded that Public Works will oversee the signs to make sure they aren't removed or vandalized.

Commissioner Kraus suggested it would be helpful to put information on the city website to tell the public what is happening on the site.

Commissioner Morris said that was an excellent idea. The plan should be put on the website.

Mr. Kullander responded once the City Council has approved the plan it would be easy to put it on the website.

Mr. Jim Anderson cultural liaison for the Mendota Dakota Community said that the four different colored stones proposed in one of the overlooks represent the colors of man.

Ms. Gail Lewellon, Pilot Knob Preservation Association, wanted to compliment City staff and the people from Great River Greening for putting together a great plan that it is true to the history of the area. There are private homes on Valencour that are concerned about the activities on the property that might impact her property. Will there be a vegetative screen to separate the public property from the private property?

Commissioner Morris asked what her particular concern was.

Ms. Lewellon responded that the homeowner would be at the City Council to address the issue. One of the concerns was activities that would be unregulated such as young people drinking on the site.

Mr. Buck responded that the vegetative screening there now is a lower quality natural area and would be hard to restore. It is a low priority to convert those screens. It would not have a negative impact on the community to leave the screen in place until some oaks get growing and then the lower quality plants could be removed.

*Approved*

Commissioner Portz asked what is happening to the families in the homes that are being removed.

Mr. Kullander responded that the two houses are owned by Acacia Cemetery and are caretakers of the property and were allowed to live in them. Rudy and his wife in the house to the north has moved into a town home in Eagan and is not sure what is happening to the people in the other house.

Commissioner Portz made a motion to approve the plan and forward it to City Council. Commissioner Hicky seconded the motion.

Commissioner Kraus said he is excited about the plan and that it is good. People 30 years from now will realize what a treasure they have in the oak savanna.

Mr. Buck said it has been an exciting project to work on. It has been wonderful to work with the City and it has been made easier because the Commission, City Council and Staff understood that the restoration work is a long term process.

**AYES: 5**

**NAYS: 0**

### **PAR 3 CASH FLOW WORKSHEET**

Mr. Sedlacek reported that October is a losing month for golf. In October 2007 the net expenditure over revenue was \$8,238.82. There were two big expenditures in October. They were property taxes (\$3,305.16) and insurance (\$2,843.00) for a total of \$6,148.16. Property taxes will not be a factor in the future because it is publicly owned land. Year to date green fees is \$62,031.52 compared to last year at \$55,159.44 for the same period. We took some hits this year because the City of Eagan did not publicize the golf course in their recreation programs because they did not know if the Par 3 would be open. Figures are ahead of what was anticipated. There are two expenses that will come up in November. One is Guy's time spent on projects for the golf course and some maintenance issues. The Community Development Block Grant funds are available to help get the club house up to ADA accessibility. The clubhouse was built in 1961 and is not ADA accessible.

Commissioner Morris asked if it was a matching grant or an outright grant.

Mr. Sedlacek reported that it was an outright grant.

Commissioner Portz said that the property taxes were shown under the miscellaneous column and should be reported as property taxes.

Commissioner Kraus asked if the insurance payments would be spread out over the 12 months next year.

*Approved*

Mr. Sedlacek said they would be.

Commissioner Morris asked about the difference in the recreation programs in 2006 compared to 2007.

Mr. Sedlacek said it was because Eagan did not advertise the programs in their recreation brochure. Some business was lost when Eagan residents didn't sign up for any recreation programs.

### **DRAFT PAR 3 ANNUAL REPORT**

Mr. Sedlacek presented the draft Par 3 annual report. He is open to any feedback regarding the report.

Commissioner Morris asked if offering a season pass to people who use the golf course frequently would be a good idea.

Mr. Sedlacek responded that they have been offered in the past. That is something that needs to be looked at.

Commissioner Morris said he could see giving people a break that use the golf course a lot.

Chair Spicer remarked that other cities and county courses offer passes for individuals and for families. It is a smart idea.

Commissioner Morris said he liked the idea of family passes.

Mr. Sedlacek said a discussion would be needed for fee structures and what do we want to offer for packages to get people to golf at the Par 3.

Chair Spicer said passes are a smart idea it guarantees revenue. There could also be junior rates, senior rates, there are a lot of things to talk about.

Mr. Sedlacek reported that in the annual report it states that the Par 3 is a publicly owned facility supported by its own revenue stream. It is expected to pay its own way. The Par 3 will not take tax dollars. It is overseen by the Assistant to the City Administrator. A part-time Golf Course Manager oversees the day-to-day operations. It is fully staffed by a part-time staff some who work only 2 hours a week or work 20 hours a week. It is not a large organization.

Commissioner Portz said a lot of the part-time staff are retired people, they do a real good job with the kids and add to the uniqueness of the golf course.

Mr. Sedlacek reported that there were 15,000 rounds of golf played in 2007, which is low. There is plenty of open time to bump up those numbers. 60% were open golf, 20% were parks and recreation leagues (junior leagues), and 20% were adult evening leagues. More money is made from leagues. We don't have past data on golfers right now, but have it on paper that needs to be

gone through. We need to decide who we want to cater to, how can we increase our profits and keep it as it has been. We started with \$69,234.43 from the referendum for capital improvements. One of the first purchases was a utility cart. St. Paul Water has not invoiced us for tapping into the water yet. A total of \$58,868.75 was spent in 2007. Expenses in 2008 are anticipated to be reduced. One of the items to purchase in 2008 is a rough mower. The next potential big project is the clubhouse. Do we want to address the roof, siding, air conditioning windows and doors. It was a good year for 2007 and slightly exceeding the estimated profit. In 2008 we need to address how do we improve the quality of play and building the customer base. With the right mix of staff the customer base can be bumped up.

Commissioner Morris said it would be nice to have a separate website for the Par 3 golf course with the annual report, how to reserve tee times and the hours.

Chair Spicer commented that other golf courses have a "greens committee" to decide golf course improvements and future improvements for a long range plan. There was a Parks and Recreation Commissioner 10 or 12 years ago who wanted to put in a cross country ski trail at the golf course.

Mr. Kullander responded that there were signs made to put up for the cross country ski trail and there was not a lot of snow that year and the idea fell away. Then the owners decided to sell the course.

Chair Spicer commented that he remembered that the Par 3 trail would be connected with the Valley Park trail and the County had a machine we could borrow. A suggestion would be to use the property in the winter as a cross country ski trail.

Mr. Kullander responded that it would be looked at again.

Chair Spicer reported that there are tournament committees for golf courses also. One way to generate revenue would be to plan senior tournaments, junior tournaments, or monthly scramble tournaments. This would get people to the golf course.

Mr. Sedlacek reported that he handed out some draft policies that he and Commissioner Portz have been working for the Par 3 golf course. They are the Financial Statement Policy which is for how the City handles the money that comes in from the golf course and Cash Management Procedure that would be handed off to employees. These are written policies for how things are done. I would like you to read them over and offer any feedback.

Chair Spicer said it is good to have things in writing and having public policies.

Commissioner Portz said on the Financial Statement Policy that on the indented circle under direct expenses he would like the following sentence added at the end of the paragraph "These expenses will be at normal rates".

Commissioner Morris said the website could ask for ideas for winter uses of the golf course. The financial statement could be put on the website also.

*Approved*

Commissioner Kraus agreed that a website should be set up from a full disclosure prospective and from a promotional prospective.

Chair Spicer said that Mr. Sedlacek did a good job.

Commissioner Portz said it's been a good quarter.

Commissioner Morris agreed as did Commissioner Kraus.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

There were none.

Commissioner Hicky made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Morris seconded the motion.

**AYES 5**

**NAYS 0**

Meeting adjourned at 7:46 P.M.