

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

**PARKS AND RECREATION MEETING**

The January 2007 meeting of the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, January 9, 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; Dave Libra, Tom Kraus, Paul Portz, Larry Craighead, Raymond Morris and Missie Hickey. City Staff present were Guy Kullander, Operations and Projects Coordinator, Jake Sedlacek Assistant to the City Administrator, and Recording Secretary Nancy Bauer.

**MINUTES:**

Commissioner Portz moved approval of minutes as corrected and Commissioner Hickey seconded the motion.

Commissioners expressed their appreciation for the level of details in the November minutes.

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

**APPLICANT UPDATE**

Chair Spicer congratulated Commissioner Portz and his reappointment to the Parks and Recreation Commission. He continued to say he was sad to say goodbye to Commissioner Libra after 13 years on the Parks Commission.

Commissioner Libra responded he enjoyed serving on the Commission and the Commission is a very component group. He enjoyed working with City Staff, Guy Kullander especially, as he gets the ball rolling on things, gets a lot of things done and follows through with the work.

Commissioner Portz said he enjoyed working with Commissioner Libra and he had an excellent idea with the car show at the 50<sup>th</sup> celebration and he will be missed.

**RECREATION REPORT**

Chair Spicer summarized the Parks and Recreation report (attached). He noticed that Teresa had applied for a grant for a block party to be held in conjunction with the Parks Celebration.

Mr. Sedlacek responded he was not sure how much the grant would be – it would be similar to last year to fund prizes and drawings. Teresa is also hoping for a grant from USTA to try a welcome back seniors to the tennis program.

Chair Spicer complemented Parks and Recreation Programmer Teresa Gangelhoff on how much she gets done as a part-time employee.

## **CITY COUNCIL GOAL SETTING WORKSHOP**

Chair Spicer said the City Council would be holding a workshop on February 9<sup>th</sup> to discuss issues from the various Commissions. Mr. Kullander had listed six possible issues to be submitted to the City Administrator for possible inclusion on the workshop agenda.

The six issues are:

- Par 3 golf course – what to do with it – if buying it - how to fund it
- MHAA – how to update various facilities per their requests
- Pilot Knob – acquisition of an additional 15 acres
- Annual Parks Celebration – which has been talked about – we have encouraged them to go ahead with it and hopefully it would go forward
- A permanent funding for the Special Park Fund
- Recreation Programmer is a part-time employee and would like to see this a full-time position or equivalent

Chair Spicer asked if there were other issues to add or delete.

Commissioner Craighead responded the he would like to add trails to the list, look to a funding source and plan to build new segments and/or reconstruct old ones.

Chair Spicer asked the cost of resurfacing a trail.

Mr. Kullander responded that to resurface a mile of trail costs about \$15,000-\$20,000 if it is in good condition. There are about 22 miles of trail in the City now.

Chair Spicer recommended the Council talk about a funding source or budget compliment for the trails.

Commissioner Morris wanted to add the resurfacing of trails and tennis courts to the discussion. There is a reference to a bond referendum and if it is an option for Par 3 and/or Pilot Knob – an additional 15 acres that may be available – to include some capital investments in our parks in a bonding package.

Chair Spicer asked if the City can issue bonds without a referendum.

Mr. Kullander responded to the best of his recollection, if the City issued bonds they must be repaid from general taxes in three years. If a referendum was done like in 1989, it would be spread out over 20 years on the taxes. There must be a citizens committee to recommend an amount for the referendum question. There is a committee working on the purchase price of the Par 3 golf course. The City is trying to get a price from the owners for what they would sell. If the bond referendum fails the owner would develop the land with single family lots.

Chair Spicer said one of the issues discussed should be in setting up a referendum group not just for the Par 3 but for the cemetery, Pilot Knob property, trails, and additions for MHAA.

Mr. Kullander responded there were sub-committees set up in the mid 80's to recommend various type of park improvements such as ball fields trails, ect. and the total amount for the bond referendum was arrived at by all of the sub-committee groups.

Chair Spicer said that a discussion item for the City Council should be a comprehensive referendum.

Commissioner Libra said three years ago there was a City Council workshop. One of the items discussed was the capital improvement plan. A significant amount of the fund is used for replacement and maintenance of park items. The playgrounds are expensive and occupy a good portion of the budget. The playground items get pushed around year to year. Little money is spent on new items for the various parks such as completing trail segments, picnic shelters, or adding new facilities. Value judgments need to be made – do we keep the items on the capital plan or delete the new items because we don't have the money. Short of a referendum we do have a special park fund and Council needs to determine if we spend it down to nothing or not. And a standpoint of funding these items and what came out of that workshop was the useful life for the trails and playground equipment. What we are looking at is funding or pulling back \$10,000 - \$11,000 for the tennis courts at Valley Park and we can do that on a haphazard basis or we can amortize these improvements and plan on replacing them over a period of time and come up with a reasonable budget. What is happening at the Ecolab development - a fair amount of money gets dedicated to that project and the money gets widdled away. At Town Center, a great amenity, the revenues for the units gets captured at the development. If the golf course gets developed as single family homes there is an estimate of \$50,000 for the parks dedication, but adding new trails is estimated to cost \$50,000. A lot of the funding source has to be used to maintain the existing facilities. If a referendum doesn't pass City Council has to dedicate tax amounts from the general fund to maintain the existing park amenities.

Chair Spicer agreed with Commissioner Libras ideas.

### **SIBLEY HIGH SCHOOL TENNIS COURTS**

Mr. Kullander said the newspaper article reported the original budget of \$27,000 was budgeted to resurface nine tennis courts at Sibley High School. When the consultant looked at the courts in more detail they discovered poor soil conditions, the foundation was bad and drain tile was needed. They have met with the Planning Commission for landscaping and drainage approvals. The new estimates for the nine tennis courts are \$750,000.00. They will bid the project and make a build or no build decision after the new bids are received.

Commissioner Craighead responded that when his two sons played on the courts when they were put in 1996 the drainage was poor. The coaches saw the water was 3" deep. The tennis courts did not have the right construction, cut corners 10 -12 years ago and now the taxpayers are paying the price.

Chair Spicer said that there was a lot of grumbling when Valley Park tennis courts were discussed and they have lasted 30 years.

Mr. Kullander responded they have been in service but not at competitive play. They are not dangerous, but have held up well.

Commissioner Craighead said that if we do Valley Park and fix them, we need to do drainage along the trail on the west side of the court. Marie Park is going to have some grading work

*Approved*

done around the tennis courts this summer to improve the drainage. It is a must to have good drainage so tennis courts can last longer.

## **SALE OF PARK LAND TO XCEL**

Chair Spicer reported that the City sold land to Xcel Energy for \$24,000 to go into the Special Park Fund.

Commissioner Hickey asked if there was a pipeline through the property.

Chair Spicer reported that it is owned by the same company.

Commissioner Hickey asked if the City was already paid for that.

Mr. Kullander explained that the land was bought in the late 1950's or early 1960's because we needed an easement for our sanitary sewer interceptor and Xcel had a pipeline easement through the land. The owner wanted to sell the land and the City bought it for the park. Xcel is now putting in new controls and piping on the parcel and expanding it to the south. The City did maintain our trail and utility easement rights on the parcel.

Commissioner Libra asked why the trees were marked with tags and if they were going to be taken out.

Mr. Kullander responded they were not going to be taken out. The trees were marked by the new owner of the Lilydale Tennis Club. The developer who wants to build condominiums on the site is asking to connect to our water main system. The shortest route is 1,700' south of Highway 13 and they wanted to come through the park and along the fence line. That would require taking out a lot of trees and vegetation. Staff suggestion was to put it in directly under the trail. The trail will be reconstructed with a thicker base and wider with fewer trees taken out. The tags identify the species of the trees. The trees are identified on the plan and put on engineering drawings to help design the route of the water main and to avoid taking out trees.

## **2006 PARK IMPROVEMENTS**

Chair Spicer summarized Mr. Kullander's memo of the 2006 park improvements. New back stops were installed at Wentworth, Valley and Marie Parks. The Civic Center had an extension added to the back top. The batting cage at Mendakota Park was upgraded. The playground equipment was replaced at Valley View Heights. Chair Spicer referenced a letter from Mr. Ayers thanking the City for the Valley View Heights neighborhood park equipment.

Chair Spicer said the one thing he is proud of in his 20 years on the Commission is that when parks projects get done they are done on a quality basis. Guy's plans have been very high quality and people do appreciate it.

He added that in Valley Park and Ivy Park border timbers will be removed and replaced plus new play components added in 2007. Bleacher pads will also be added in various parks in 2007.

*Approved*

Mr. Kullander responded that the bleacher pads are a companion project. Grant money was received from the County for removing handicap barriers from the City parks and to construct a pathway for handicap access from the parking lot the ball fields. When the pathways are done the bleacher pads can be installed.

Chair Spicer added that not everything that was planned in 2006 got done but a lot was done.

Commissioner Portz said he knows that staff was busy with regular projects, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Pilot Knob site acquisition which took a lot of clearing, and MHAA got some projects completed this year by coming to the Parks and Recreation meetings.

Mr. Kullander responded that a lot of jobs get “piggy backed” on engineering jobs when they are completed. I took advantage of the work that’s already being done and added park or trail improvements.

Commissioner Morris responded that Mr. Kullander sees connections a lot of other people wouldn’t see and it’s admirable. You deserve all of our thanks. The citizens of Mendota Heights should also thank you for your contributions. You’ve done public employees an admirable favor in the way you conduct yourself.

Mr. Kullander thanked Commissioner Morris. He also added that Terry, Mike, John with the Parks Department at Public Works do a lot of work and find opportunities and contractors for work that needs to be done. They do a lot of work themselves such as clearing brush by the trails. These guys are invaluable and we all work together.

Commissioner Craighead responded that buckthorn was removed the last four years and we need to continue to work on it. It is an important issue for the City and we need to be concerned about it.

Chair Spicer said Mr. Kullander asked the City Council for extra money and with Mr. Kullander’s help the Parks Commission received it to do work on the tennis courts, trail maintenance and eradication of buckthorn. Good job on getting the money and the work done.

Commissioner Portz said one thing that isn’t in the memo is the Pilot Knob dedication. Do we want to weigh in on it? Last year the Council bought 8.5 acres and currently they are thinking of buying an additional 15 acres.

Commissioner Morris responded that the Commission has weighed in on it in the past. They have talked about how little park land is available in the city.

Chair Spicer thought the Commission was unanimous in the recovery of green space and that it is a priority. At one time Mr. Kullander had identified 10-12 parcels as possible use for ball fields and we are down to 1 or 2 parcels that have not been developed.

*Approved*

## **SPECIAL PARK FUND PROJECTED REVENUES**

Chair Spicer reported that the existing balance as of August 2006 is \$273,144.05 as per Mr. Kullander's memo. Some of the money is already spent on playground expenditures. \$24,000 will be added to the balance from the sale of land to Xcel.

Mr. Kullander responded the City is anticipating \$238,500.00 from the Opus development and the City has received \$42,000.00 to date. Once a unit is sold and recorded at the County, the park dedication fee is paid to the City. We should get the balance of the park dedication fees in the next 15 months.

Chair Spicer said Mr. Kullander also made a list of possible dedication fees – so there is some future revenue identified for the Special Park Fund.

Commissioner Kraus asked if the \$42,000.00 was included in the \$273,144.05.

Mr. Kullander responded that it was not.

Commissioner Kraus asked if the \$42,000.00 was included in the \$238,500.00.

Mr. Kullander responded that it was.

Commissioner Kraus commented that the fund may be \$10,000.00 - \$15,000.00 below that number.

Mr. Kullander responded that the fund balance as of today would be about \$200,000.00 to \$220,000.00.

Chair Spicer asked if the \$200,000.00 to 220,000.00 included the \$30,000.00 of the \$42,000.00.

Mr. Kullander responded that it did.

Chair Spicer asked if the \$200,000.00 to 220,000.00 included the \$42,000.00 from Opus.

Mr. Kullander responded that he forgot to add in the \$42,000.00 from Opus. The \$80,000.00 was for Valley Park that was supposed to be finished this year, but because of the weather, the equipment did not get installed. \$15,000 was paid for the equipment and the \$20,000 to install has not been paid and the equipment is being stored now. Same with Ivy Park.

Commissioner Kraus said that between now and early 2008 we are looking at \$500,000.00 if we don't get any other sources of funding.

Mr. Kullander responded yes.

Commissioner Kraus asked if any funding is assured through the Opus development and the current balance we are looking at \$500,000.00 through early 2008.

*Approved*

Mr. Kullander responded that he put in some developments that could happen in the next 10 years to look at how much money we have for the next 10 years.

## **5 YEAR CAPITAL PLAN**

Chair Spicer said Mr. Kullander has submitted a status report of the current 5 year capital plan and asked if the Civic Center ball field had been planned and costs figured out for 2007.

Mr. Kullander responded that the current 5 year plan is based on spending \$115,000 to \$125,000 a year on average. In 2007, we have budgeted projects for \$75,000 to \$120,000. In 2008, \$110,000 has been budgeted and in 2009, \$150,000 has been budgeted. If the Commission wants to continue with the amounts budgeted in the 5 year plan some projects need to be taken off the list to do the Civic Center project.

Commissioner Kraus said if we added the MHAA projects, we would get well beyond the \$500,000.00 we have in projected revenue.

Commissioner Morris said that the Commission has already rescheduled a number of the rehabilitation projects for a later date that were supposed to be addressed in 2005 and 2006.

Chair Spicer said some projects have been moved up like Valley View for 2007-2008. The fund is getting about \$190,000 more and that is really \$430,000 not including interest.

Commissioner Libra asked if the numbers included in the estimates include overhead and Mr. Kullander's time allocated to these projects.

Mr. Kullander responded he usually does not put those costs in.

Commissioner Libra said that is another charge to add and asked if the special assessments that were being paid for from the Special Park Fund that were being paid on an on-going basis were paid.

Mr. Kullander responded that there were two or three years left at \$3,000 - \$4,000 a year.

Commissioner Morris asked if the costs in the 5 year capital plan reflected today's dollars.

Mr. Kullander responded that they do and he has bumped up the current numbers a couple of thousand dollars to reflect today's costs.

Chair Spicer said the Commission should concentrate on things that are planned for 2007, that are already budgeted and talk to MHAA.

Mr. Kullander responded that the dugouts at the Civic Center and Mendakota Park could be done for \$65,000.000. MHAA has a long list items they would like to see done. MHAA wanted to upgrade Hagstrom King Park and Friendly Hills Park to baseball fields which would be backstops and outfield fencing. We should know MHAA priorities because if fencing is more important than the dugouts – the fencing will take three or four months with community input and getting City Council approval. The dugouts could be planned and bid in a month or two.

Mr. Joel Johns, President of MHAA, spoke and said Brian Hallman of MHAA has applied for the open seat on the Parks and Recreation Commission and Mr. Johns hopes it works out. It has been great getting the two groups to talk. He got a lot of feedback from the community and MHAA. There is a lot of optimism and excitement that projects are getting done and wants to thank the Commission and Commissioner Portz for their efforts.

Mr. Johns continued with the list of priorities of MHAA by need and expenditures:

1. Civic Center - outfield fence and batting cage
2. Civic Center dugouts – these changes would make the park a well rounded baseball park for 12 – 13 years old.
3. Hagstrom King Park – expanding the backstops, adding an outfield fence and dugouts.
4. Mendakota Park would cost about \$40,000.00 - \$60,000.00 while it would be a great protection for the kids from the heat and prevent plastic tents from popping up this item is number 4 because of the cost.

Chair Spicer commented that one of the problems MHAA has is competing interests. Soccer fields need to be open, baseball fields need to be enclosed. Putting up fences in the parks is not done because of aesthetic reasons.

Commissioner Libra said Hagstrom King Park is not used for soccer and could be upgraded with resident input. Friendly Hills Park is used for soccer.

Mr. Johns responded that Hagstrom King Park has a natural barrier towards right field along with homeowner's fences and the left field side has a pond.

Chair Spicer asked what would need to be done to upgrade Hagstrom King Park.

Mr. Kullander responded that one issue would be parking. It is on street parking now. That issue would need to be discussed with neighbors. We would need to figure out what fences are needed, dugouts locations and parking needs. I would take it to Council saying the Commission wants to modify the 5 year plan and do this project in 2007 and establish a working budget. If Council is agreeable to that, I could get cost estimates and then do a community mail out for input. Then it would go back to Council with community input and costs estimates and then we would go out for bid. It would take 2 -3 months. If we started tonight, by April it could go out for bid if everything went well. Council would need to be agreeable to use Special Park Funds for this project.

Commissioner Kraus asked if it went out for bid in April when could the work be done?

Mr. Kullander replied the work could be done in April for maybe a week and the field would not be disturbed since it was mostly fencing. If there were a parking lot added that would be away from the ball field.

Commissioner Hickey asked if they should do the work at Hagstrom King Park rather than the Civic Center.

*Approved*

Chair Spicer said the Civic Center work would not include community input and Hagstrom King Park would require community input and would take longer to implement.

Mr. Johns responded that Hagstrom King Park is used all summer long for a lot of activities by MHAA.

Mr. Kullander responded that one issue that needs to be considered at the Civic Center is school teams use the fields then MHAA uses the fields after them. This generates a lot of cars at the overlap of two games, arriving and leaving.

Chair Spicer responded that he felt Hagstrom King was shorted of amenities and money wasn't spent on that park as originally planned.

Commissioner Portz responded it was nice to have a list of priorities from MHAA.

Chair Spicer said he would like to see the Commission get started on Hagstrom King Park and start getting community input.

Commissioner Libra said improving Hagstrom King Park would relieve pressure on Mendakota Park since there are no lights and the more use we can get out of the parks will make sense and this is a cheap solution.

Chair Spicer directed Mr. Kullander to get started on the process of improving Hagstrom King Park.

Mr. Kullander asked if the Commission wanted to put it on next Tuesday's council agenda and wanted to know if the Commission wanted to hold a community open house or forum for next month.

Chair Spicer said that would work.

Mr. Kullander asked if the Friendly Hills playground project could be taken out of 2007 and then add Hagstrom King and the Civic Center.

Chair Spicer asked if Friendly Hills playground was safe.

Mr. Kullander responded that yes it was and it would be ok to move the project back a year.

Chair Spicer asked the Commissioners if they minded moving the Friendly Hills rehabilitation back a year.

None of the Commissioners minded.

Mr. Kullander wanted clarification to go ahead with the Hagstrom King Park upgrades and Civic Center dugouts.

Chair Spicer said yes and the batting cage.

*Approved*

Mr. Kullander responded that the outfield fence would have to be moved 20-25' and could affect other users of the field and where to locate the batting cage .

Chair Spicer asked if it could be located between the parking lot and the right field fence.

Mr. Kullander asked Chair Spicer if he had forgotten about the “golden triangle” of trees planted to commemorate the City’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Chair Spicer said near the “golden triangle”.

Chair Spicer thought that the “golden triangle” could be moved.

Mr. Kullander said the City Council has been protective of the aesthetics of the Civic Center site and a batting cage would be an imposing looking structure if located here.

Commissioner Craighead opposes moving in the outfield fence so more adult groups can use the field and wants to get other group input. He believes Ms. Gangelhoff also believes this also.

Mr. Johns responded he had played softball at the Mendakota fields and says the fence is too short for adult softball play.

Chair Spicer said the fence is at mid range - not long enough for adult softball, too long for MHAA.

Commissioner Craighead responded that if you move the fence in 20 feet it can’t be used by adults. He would like Ms. Gangelhoff’s input on field use.

Commissioner Kraus suggested there should be a strategic plan for the fields so all interested groups using the fields are considered. He supports helping MHAA but other user groups needs to be addressed. He would like suggestions on how to reach the groups that are interested in using the fields.

Commissioner Morris agreed with Commissioner Kraus’ comments - he also supports MHAA - but these are issues that need to be discussed and there is a limited amount of funds. A certain minority of the people come before the Commission with their concerns.

Commissioner Portz agrees with Commissioner Kraus’ comments about coming up with a strategic plan for the fields. MHAA has 1,000 or participants and hundreds of families and with MHAA’s input there is a good representation of the community.

Commissioner Kraus said if you took a survey of the residents that it would rival the number of participants in MHAA activities. These issues keep coming up and how do we tackle them? Some of the fundamental issues are not being addressed.

Mr. Johns responded that he thought a referendum would address the problems.

Commissioner Morris thinks there is more than enough special interests to present a package that would benefit the community and their home values.

Commissioner Libra said that the comments about planning are important and MHAA needs to have some attendance at the meetings to present information. Teresa would have information on field usage with scheduling from soccer, baseball, and softball users. MHAA baseball and soccer commissioners have information during their season with the scheduling of the fields. When lights were being considered at Mendakota people would say the fields weren't being used.

You can't have 100% usage plus you can overuse the fields. Baseball usage can be figured out between Ms. Gangelhoff and the MHAA baseball commissioner.

Commissioner Craighead said we need to get Ms. Gangelhoff's input before we go ahead with these improvements.

Chair Spicer said yes – let's start the process and get community input.

Commissioner Kraus said let's go ahead and start asking these questions.

Commissioner Craighead said fences in Hagstrom King Park could happen in May. We don't have to have community input with the Civic Center improvements and we need more community input.

Chair Spicer said none of these improvements can happen without Council approval. Let's just start the process and community input may possibly shoot down the process.

Mr. Sedlacek was wondering if any Commissioner would like to form a subgroup to find data to pull together and figure out some strategic planning ideas.

Chair Spicer said Commissioner Kraus would be good for that group.

Commissioner Kraus responded he would be happy to do that.

Commissioner Morris responded that he would be interested too.

Mr. Sedlacek suggested having a meeting before the next Parks and Recreation Commission meeting and come back with some quality input from the community to plan a strategy.

Commissioner Libra suggested looking at the Comprehensive Plan because it looked at park facilities, objectives and goals.

Mr. Kullander responded that it didn't look too closely at specific facilities or park function. It looks at how it interconnects with other communities and locations throughout the City. He thought Commissioner Libra was thinking of the 1985 facility needs study done. A community survey was done back then with a citizens committee. It was used as a guide for their discussions.

*Approved*

Chair Spicer said this would be a good experience for Jake and Commissioner Kraus. He believes the squeaky wheel gets things done. There is no great system. Chair Spicer tries to balance the immediate needs with the budget. It's a patch work approach and it seems to work. For a community our size we have very nice facilities.

Commissioner Kraus asked how faced with these decisions do we make them rational?

Chair Spicer said because you asked the question it shows the City Council was correct in instituting term limits. You do get into a pattern - right or wrong. New people have different ways of doing things and they may be better. It's a healthy change and Council did a good thing.

Commissioner Craighead said he would like to see more trail work on the 5 year plan.

Mr. Kullander wanted clarification for his memo to the Council – do you want to go ahead with Hagstrom King Park and Civic Center improvements.

Chair Spicer said we are investigating opportunities at the Civic Center.

Mr. Kullander said he would include in the memo that the Parks Commission was investigating improvements at the Civic Center, there would be a public information meeting at the Parks Commissioner meeting, develop a budget for 2007 and adding the new projects in the 5 year plan.

Chair Spicer agreed and said to move another project for budgetary needs.

#### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Morris brought up the skate park. It is one of our shining successes at Rogers Lake Park – it's constantly used. The skating clinic was full. It has been two years since anything has been done at the skating park. It would be nice to call Timmy Meyers and say a Commissioner asked about the park and see how it was going. They have done a good job with the park. It's worth investing in.

Mr. Kullander responded that he would give Timmy Meyers a call and says he does stop in and chats.

Commissioner Portz moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 P.M.