

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

PARKS AND RECREATION MEETING

January 12, 2010

The January 2010 meeting of the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, January 12, 2010, 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 Paul Portz, Commissioners: Tom Kraus, Michael Toth, Ray Morris, Maureen Brackey, and Steve Commers. Staff present was: Jake Sedlacek, Assistant to the City Administrator, Guy Kullander, Parks Project Manager, Teresa Gangelhoff, Parks and Recreation Programmer, and Nancy Bauer, Recording Secretary.

MINUTES

Commissioner Morris made a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Kraus seconded the motion.

AYES: 6

NAYES: 0

RECREATION REPORT

Chair Portz commented that the recreation report will be followed by a parks celebration discussion.

Simple Steps has ended for now.

Learn to skate had a great response. Three extra classes were added because of the great turnout. There was a comment that the maintenance crews have done a great job cleaning the rinks with all the snow. Chair Portz agrees with the comment.

Commissioner Commers said Friendly Hills has a great base he was skating on it.

Ms. Gangelhoff responded that is because of the asphalt base.

Commissioner Brackey asked about the process for the hockey association reserving ice time.

Ms. Gangelhoff replied they come in before the season and discuss their usage of the rinks so one or two of the parks would always be open.

Approved

Commissioner Brackey asked if the whole evening is blocked off for their use?

Ms. Gangelhoff said she believes it is from 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.

Commissioner Brackey asked if it could be posted at the rinks?

Ms. Gangelhoff said it is posted at the warming houses and the rink attendants have the schedule. Ice skating lessons are also posted.

Commissioner Kraus asked if it could be posted on line?

Ms. Gangelhoff said she would ask to have it posted on the website.

Chair Portz said each park has two rinks - the hockey rink and the pleasure rink. There is always some open ice.

Commissioner Commers asked about keeping records of the number of skaters on the rink. It is done by hour? At the end of the season will we know which hours had the most skaters?

Ms. Gangelhoff said she could figure out what hours are the busiest.

Commissioner Brackey asked if Public Works could tell if the Ivy Park rink has been used?

Mr. Kullander said he talked to Mr. Blum and he said there is evidence it is being used quite a bit. There is an extension cord running from the neighbor's house for lights. Flooding is being done by the night crew from Wentworth Park. It has been working out really well this year.

Commissioner Brackey said it is a cute rink.

Mr. Kullander said it has been asked if the rink could be enlarged? If a Commissioner were interested in discussing enlarging the rink a meeting could be set up at the site.

Commissioner Brackey said she would be interested in a meeting.

Ms. Gangelhoff said March 22, 2010, at 6:00 P.M. is the date for going on line to sign up for summer programs. If someone does not have access to the internet they can come in the next day at City Hall to sign up.

Commissioner Kraus asked about the skating lesson schedule. Skating lessons started January 2, 2010 and that may still be considered holiday time for people.

Approved

Ms. Gangelhoff said she could look at starting the skating lessons a week later but a concern is the weather when skating lessons are scheduled to end and whether it will cold enough to keep the ice.

PARKS CELEBRATION

Chair Portz reported the Parks Celebration is the first Saturday in June. About 1,000 people attend with their families. There are a lot of activities. The quality and fun of the event should be kept.

Mr. Sedlacek said the Commission voiced their opinion of keeping the scope of the Parks Celebration as it has been in the past. A couple of things will be simplified. The event sponsor level will be changed and the multi level sponsor will be eliminated. Mr. Sedlacek will be Ms. Gangelhoff's helper this year. The letters will get out. Volunteer opportunities will be clearer defined, including times and expectations of what needs to be done.

Commissioner Morris suggested a one page position description for the volunteers with title, hours, duties, and expectations.

Mr. Sedlacek said last year volunteers that helped set up tables the day of the event made a big impact.

Ms. Gangelhoff said the event is from noon to 3:00 P.M.

Chair Portz suggested Commissioners put the date on their calendars if they are interested in volunteering.

Commissioner Commers asked if it was June 5, 2010.

Ms. Gangelhoff said it is always the first Saturday in June and this year that is June 5, 2010.

Mr. Sedlacek suggested talking about Mendakota Park before Valley Park until a lap top is set up.

MENDAKOTA PARK IMPROVMENTS

Chair Portz said Mendakota Park is the flagship playground. It is a very nice facility. The discussion is about making it better.

Mr. Kullander said the park has been talked about the last six or seven months. In May or June the Parks Commission made a recommendation to City Council to put \$52,000 in the 2010 budget. That amount was approved by City Council.

Once the designing began the final price is about \$56,500 for the three components. The main issue is to put in a 2-5 year old play structure. The existing equipment is going on 20 years. Putting in a "weevos" area will give a 2-5 year old dedicated play area. It was first discussed putting in an engineered wood surface but the Commission decided to put in a rubberized surface instead and that brought up the cost of the improvements. The components for the three areas is \$18,978.00. The cost of the removal and installing a new surface is \$37,521.00.

The sand box area was looked at. In 1989 diggers were put in and they are getting worn out. New equipment would be put in to meet ADA safety standards. There is direct sunlight in the area. A shade shelter would be installed.

The third element idea was to put in panels with a resilient surface. The roof shown in the plan is not included in the plan. That is an option that could be installed later. Musical tones on the panels are being suggested.

Commissioner Morris asked if Earl F. Anderson was moving away from the style equipment being installed?

Mr. Kullander responded they are.

Commissioner Morris asked if the equipment would be available?

Mr. Kullander said because the project was started with the catalog presented the equipment could be obtained.

Commissioner Morris asked if the roof would be able to be obtained down the road?

Mr. Kullander said it could be obtained directly from the manufacturer.

Chair Portz asked how much the roof cost?

Mr. Kullander responded about \$2,500.

Chair Portz said he liked the roof.

Commissioner Morris said he did too, especially with sun damage concerns.

Mr. Kullander said the project is over budget and would not like to include the roof in the recommendation.

Commissioner Toth asked which park last had 2-5 year old equipment installed?

Mr. Kullander said there is no park with 2-5 year old play equipment. Spring toys have been put in some parks to address the 2-5 year old play equipment.

Approved

Commissioner Kraus asked about the play equipment in Marie Park?

Mr. Kullander said the equipment is not dedicated 2-5 year old play equipment.

Commissioner Morris made a motion to accept the bid and recommend it's passage by the City Council with half the funding from the Special Park Fund and half the funding from the Cell Tower Fund and the reason why it's over the original working budget is because members of the City Council switching to the resilient surface rather than the original surface as planned.

Commissioner Kraus seconded the motion.

Commissioner Commers asked if the City Council switched the surface?

Mr. Kullander responded no.

Commissioner Morris retracted that part of the motion.

Mr. Kullander responded the Parks Commission switched the surface.

Right now there is pea gravel and a rubberized surface. The surface is also 20 years old. Blending the two surfaces would be difficult and would not make it ADA accessible. Putting in a new surface will make the entire area handicap accessible. The surface could be engineered wood fiber or a rubberized surface.

Commissioner Commers asked if we could ask the company to do the project for \$52,000.

Mr. Kullander said then components would be eliminated.

Commissioner Morris said they have tried to in the past but components do get eliminated.

Chair Portz said the Parks Commission has looked at other vendors in the past. The Commission is comfortable with Earl F. Anderson - they provide quality products and low prices on the equipment and installation.

Commissioner Morris said the Commission has a long track record with Earl F. Anderson. The equipment does last a long time.

Commissioner Brackey said there was a lot of thought put into the equipment it is not extravagant and it is interesting for kids in wheelchairs and strollers.

Commissioner Morris said the wood surface would have to be maintained every year and kids crawling around could get splinters.

Approved

Commissioner Toth asked if the panels are at \$6,238 without the roof?

Mr. Kullander said yes.

Commissioner Commers said there is not \$56,000 and the Commission has to figure out a way to get it to \$52,000.

Mr. Kullander said the money is not from the General Budget. There is a Special Park Fund dedicated to capital improvements in the parks. There is no finite number for projects. There is flexibility with the amounts.

Commissioner Kraus said if \$56,000 is spent the impact would be on other projects. Maybe fewer projects would be done. Lets do less and do the project properly.

Commissioner Morris said the Commission has done things qualitative and holds off on other projects. This is our flagship park. I recommend we go with the plan. The plan is not extravagant. The City Council may not agree with us.

Commissioner Kraus said it is not an extravagant project. I stand by the plan and propose to Council to accept this bid and use the funding sources identified and hold off on other projects.

Commissioner Morris recalls talking about the woodchips and kids crawling around and getting wood chips in their fingers.

Mr. Kullander said 5-12 year olds do not have a problem with woodchips, but the younger kids may.

Commissioner Morris said the resilient surface does take quite an impact.

Commissioner Commers asked Commissioner Morris to restate his motion.

Commissioner Morris made a motion to recommend to the City Council the approval of the installation of the park equipment by Earl F. Anderson as it is stated in their quote dated December 28, 2009, with the funding coming from half of the Special Park Funds and half coming from the Cell Tower Fund.

Commissioner Kraus seconded the motion.

AYES 5

NAYS 1 (Commers)

VALLEY PARK

Chair Portz reported that in August the Parks Commission went over the one year plan presented by Mr. Kullander and he recommended 10 out of 110 projects to focus on for

Approved

the coming year. Valley Park was focused on because it is in the heart of the City, large and has a lot of potential. A field trip was arranged for the Commission through Valley Park. There are valleys, ravines, swamps, trails and it is a large area.

Mr. Wiley Buck, Restoration Ecologist, for Great River Greening introduced himself. He has also been helping with Pilot Knob hill.

We have been active on the site since September to do invasive species controls. Garlic mustard is one of the invasive species. It was sprayed in the fall and areas were mulched that were susceptible to the seeds. They will be back in the spring also.

More areas were discovered to have garlic mustard. It is more extensive along 35 and to the east. It is a multi year project to control the species. The seeds can last seven years.

Commissioner Toth asked if the area by 35 was state owned?

Mr. Kullander said there is a fence that separates the easement.

Commissioner Toth asked if the seeds could be spread from the state property and could assistance be received from the state?

Mr. Buck said he would check with the lead technician.

Chair Portz asked if Mr. Kullander had any experience with getting help from the state?

Mr. Kullander responded the state would probably not help.

Mr. Buck said several approaches were taken for the buckthorn control. Competitive plants were planted. Penn Sedge was planted to choke out buckthorn seedlings. It is an attractive plant. 1,000 plants were planted in the fall. The areas focused on were the two oak knobs that were identified by the south end by Marie Avenue and by the north bridge.

Commissioner Brackey asked if it would crowd out other plants.

Mr. Buck said yes it would. It is good for a disturbed site which Valley Park is.

On the south oak grove by Marie Avenue limited buckthorn shredding was done on resprouts.

The main application was done by treating with herbicide. It was treated with Garlon 4.

Commissioner Toth asked what other species the herbicide would kill?

Mr. Buck said it would kill any woody plants and broadleaves. They are careful not to overspray.

Commissioner Toth asked how long it stayed in the soil?

Mr. Buck said it is not long and will not cause problems.

There are three opportunities to do work. There is another large oak grove by the bench and bridge. There are two acres of oaks and some buckthorn and other invasive species. It would be an intensive project to bring it back.

Prescribed fire should be considered to control buckthorn. It can be smoky. Buckthorn is sensitive to fire.

Commissioner Morris asked if the seeds were sensitive to fire?

Mr. Buck said the seeds were not. It would be a five year plan to control the buckthorn. Another opportunity is under the utility easements - it is open, has rough terrain, and is in rough shape by the north bridge. Prairie reconstruction could be done. The utilities pose a problem.

Another opportunity is pine thinning on the south end. There is a dense stand right now. To promote larger pines thinning could be done in the area.

Commissioner Commers asked if every third tree would be cut?

Mr. Buck said roughly a third – but would have to look at the area.

Commissioner Morris asked if it was a commercial stand for pulp?

Mr. Buck said you could maybe break even on it.

Chair Portz said we are making progress by getting rid of the invasive species. Step two is putting in new attractive plants. Step three would be to thin the pines.

Commissioner Toth asked about the age of the oaks?

Mr. Buck thinks they are over 100 years old.

Commissioner Toth asked how long the oaks last?

Commissioner Morris said about 40 to 50 more years.

Mr. Buck agrees with the comment. Red oaks may start dropping now.

Commissioner Toth asked if there is a concern for oak wilt?

Approved

Mr. Buck said that oak wilt is quite fatal in red oaks. Not so in white and burr oaks. No young oak trees are being generated right now, because of the buckthorn.

Chair Portz said it will take years to notice the work that is being done now. Neighbors have asked to help fix and clean up the park.

Mr. Buck said he could organize a volunteer event for work in the park.

Chair Portz said they are all very good first steps.

Mr. Sedlacek said there will also be information in the next City newsletter from Xcel because of gas lines in Valley Park.

PAR 3 ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Sedlacek said a draft annual Par 3 report was included in the Commissioner's packet. It is a self supporting enterprise. The City bought the golf course two and half years ago and would not use tax dollars to run it. The primary geographic market is within five miles. Families do come from points across the Twin Cities.

The club house manager does promotions and there is a greens committee to make suggestions. It is a short course.

It is a public owned facility with its own revenue stream. A part time clubhouse manager oversees clubhouse operations and maintenance work is contracted out.

In 2009, 12,562 rounds of golf were played over 193 days. In 2008, 12,314 rounds of golf were played over 191 days.

Chair Portz asked if that was counting the golf leagues?

Mr. Sedlacek said it did include leagues. The junior leagues and camps were not included.

Revenue in 2009 was \$195, 572 with expenses of \$192,164 for a net profit of \$3,408. Revenue in 2008 was \$186,532 with expenses of \$170,779 for a net profit of \$31,210.

In 2009, there is an administrative assistant to help with accounting and assisting with program registrations. It is budgeted at .25 FTE and will be adjusted to .20 FTE.

2009 was a less eventful year for improvements. Minor projects were done for turf improvement and landscaping around the clubhouse. Expenses in 2010 are anticipated to be in the range of \$31,000. A greens mower should be replaced and the roof is a concern. Tee and monument signs have been slated to be replaced. The camera system failed and staff has received estimates of \$1,700 for replacement.

Approved

There was a strong start to the season in 2009 with a beautiful spring and October was slow due to bad weather. There were more rounds of golf in November than all of October in 2009. Staff is going to recommend rehiring the clubhouse manager for next year.

Goals for 2010 - #1 maintain customer-friendly atmosphere in the clubhouse and on the course #2 refine and enhance offerings for the local youth #3 retain current league and coordinating promotions – an early Friday morning adult league will be offered this year #4 broaden offerings for casual adult golfers and family golf outings and utilize tee times. Tee times have been slow and work will continue with the junior PGA, #5 continue seeking out efficiencies in operations through staffing, using resources efficiently and improving procedures.

The last page is the profit and loss projection the numbers current through January 7, 2010. Under cost of sales GM Contract is the employee cost for maintenance at the golf course. There were a number of deferred maintenance costs that were done in September such as improvements to the maintenance building for safety reasons. The budget for 2010 for all maintenance costs is \$49,000 expenditures for 2009 was \$63,000.

Our ending cash balance for 2009 is \$51,106 and has exceeded the goal that was set at \$40,000.

Chair Portz said that overall it has been a good year for the golf course. Managing the course and key decisions made by you was key to the golf course's success.

Commissioner Kraus asked about the net profit for 2009 on page three of the annual report it is \$3,408 and \$19,653 on the profit and loss project page. The number should be clarified on page three of the report.

Commissioner Commers asked if the tee signs and monuments signs that is budgeted for 2010 is \$3,000 each sign?

Mr. Sedlacek said it is \$3,000 for nine tee signs and \$3,000 for the monument sign.

Chair Portz asked when the green committee meets next?

Mr. Sedlacek stated in February with a full agenda such as a 2011 budget. Parks and Recreation Commission will need to approve the budget in May. Budgeting procedures will be changed for the Parks and Recreation Commission to get it to City Council earlier.

Commissioner Brackey asked if the greens committee is open to the public?

Mr. Sedlacek said it is. The committee is an advisory committee consisting of Commissioner Kraus, Chair Portz, Dick Spicer, and Annette Patient.

Approved

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Morris said the H1N1 vaccine is available for everyone and people should get vaccinated. There will be a third wave.

Chair Portz asked when Mr. Kullander's retirement date was set for?

Mr. Sedlacek responded May 19, 2010.

Chair Portz said Mr. Kullander should be an agenda item for the next four meetings so he could share his knowledge and experience with the Commission. He can pick the topic.

Commissioner Brackey said she would like to work with Ms. Gangelhoff to put together the summer programs and help with the brainstorming for them.

Mr. Sedlacek said the Spring Clean Up will be May 1, 2010, at Mendakota Park. June 5, 2010, is the Parks Celebration date. The City will be advertising the position for the summer programs and if the Commissioners knows of anybody who would be interested encourage them to contact City Hall.

Commissioner Commers made a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Toth seconded the motion.

AYES 6

NAYS 0

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 P.M.

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