

Approved

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

PARKS AND RECREATION MEETING

February 10, 2009

The February 2009 meeting of the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, February 10, 2009, 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, Ray Morris, Larry Craighead, Maureen Brackey, Michael Toth and Liz O'Brien. Staff present were: Jake Sedlacek, Assistant to the City Administrator, John Mazzitello, Public Works Director/City Engineer, Guy Kullander, Parks Project Manager, Teresa Gangelhoff, Recreation Programmer, and Nancy Bauer, Recording Secretary.

MINUTES:

Commissioner Craighead made a motion to approve the minutes with corrections.
Commissioner Brackey seconded the motion.

AYES: 7

NAYES: 0

PARKS AND RECREATION REPORT

Chair Portz asked if the Boltz's Tae Kwon Do spring break program would be held at the Mendota Plaza.

Ms. Gangelhoff responded that it would be held at the Mendota Plaza.

She also said she has applied for a grant for trail signage and to start "healthy" programs by getting people outside and active. Simple steps starts April 1st. She has 50 t-shirts for the first 50 walkers that sign up at the parks celebration.

Chair Portz reported that Sibley gymnastics is going on and started January 24th.

Ms. Gangelhoff reported that skating lessons ended last Saturday. The 55+ program committee is planning programs this summer for seniors.

Chair Portz reported that the Parks Celebration is June 6th with a Minnesota Twins game on a large screen TV on June 5th at Town Center. The celebration will be combined with the School Districts Anniversary Celebration.

Commissioner Brackey asked Ms. Gangelhoff if she was looking for volunteers within the community.

Ms. Gangelhoff replied she is looking for volunteers and anyone can volunteer. Please call her at City Hall if you would like to volunteer.

Chair Portz said the ice rinks were going strong until a few days ago.

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Ms. Gangelhoff replied that Terry at Public Works closed the rinks on Monday. They will be closed until Thursday when it is suppose to get cold again. People can check the hotline to see when they are open.

Ms. Gangelhoff reported there is a new tennis coach for the summer. There will be a travelling tennis team to play with other kids in Inver Grove Heights and West St. Paul.

Chair Portz commented there is a registration night coming up.

Ms. Gangelhoff said there will be Parks and Recreation registration on Monday, March 2, 2009, where people can register for all parks and recreation programs such as the golf camps, golf lessons, golf leagues and tennis lessons. Mendota Heights Athletic Association will also be there to register for t-ball.

Also, being planned for this year is a summer playground program. It would be a weekly program with themes such as water week and nature week. There would be younger kids in the morning and then older kids in the afternoon. It could be a four week program.

Commissioner O'Brien asked how many kids it would be limited to.

Ms. Gangelhoff said about 20 kids. There would need to be one instructor for every 10 kids.

Commissioner O'Brien said this is an idea to utilize the parks in the City with the kids.

Chair Portz asked if it would happen in the summer.

Commissioner O'Brien said for four weeks in the summer. The details are still being worked out.

Chair Portz asked about summer programs.

Ms. Gangelhoff reported that Safety camp is in August. Skateboard camp will be at Rogers Lake Park with 3rd Lair holding the camp. The Minnesota Thunder will hold a soccer camp. The fishing derby will be in July.

Chair Portz asked if the performances in the park was held in one park or different parks.

Ms. Gangelhoff replied that one night it will be held at Sibley and one night at Rogers Lake Park with the fishing derby and one performance at Mendakota Park. The summer playhouse is held at Marie and Mendakota Parks on Mondays.

Chair Portz said that three pages of the Heights Highlites are devoted to parks and recreation programs. Also, on the first page is an article looking for a Parks and Recreation Commissioner. If anyone wants to apply they should send a letter of interest by February 20th to City Administrator Jim Danielson. This is a fun commission to work on.

Commissioner O'Brien asked if any application have been submitted yet.

Mr. Sedlacek responded that two applications have been received. Council would like to interview on March 3rd before the Council meeting.

INTRODUCTION OF PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR JOHN MAZZITELLO

Mr. Mazzitello reported that he has been the City Public Works Director/City Engineer for six months next week. He grew up in St. Paul. He graduated from Cretin Derham Hall. He went to Marquette University via a ROTC scholarship. He entered the air force as an active duty Lieutenant in 1992. He settled in Fairbanks Alaska where he worked for the State of Alaska and the Department of Environmental Conservation and Department of Transportation. His family moved back to Minnesota in 2004 and lived in St. Paul where he worked for a private consulting firm. While looking to move out of St. Paul to Mendota Heights he came across the job in Mendota Heights.

Chair Portz said he was glad to have him at the meeting for an introduction and for opening a line of communication. There is a lot going on for opportunities for the Parks and Recreation Commission especially with the new Minnesota Sales Tax and the Federal Stimulus Acts. Projects should be applied for with this kind of funding available. The trails need upgrading in the community. Staff could follow up on these opportunities. If anyone on the Commission see opportunities they should pass it on to staff.

Mr. Mazzitello reported that the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Act that passed in the last election is being solidified in the legislature as to how it can be processed and utilized within communities. Through the City's affiliation with the League of Minnesota Cities, Minnesota Public Works Association and the City Engineers Association the City gets updates as the process unfolds.

Mr. Sedlacek said the Parks and Recreation Commission talks about trails and funding for them is not in the budget. There is Municipal State Aid money for streets that could be used for trails which falls under Mr. Mazzitello.

Commissioner Morris suggested that Mr. Mazzitello check on ISTEA money that will be coming out from the federal level that can be used for rehabbing the trails in the City. It could be worthwhile checking with MnDOT and letting them know that trails need some major renovation.

Chair Portz asked if it was ok to contact Mr. Mazzitello with any ideas.

Mr. Mazzitello responded absolutely, stop by or feel free to call.

Commissioner Kraus asked what are the top priorities or responsibilities of his department.

Mr. Mazzitello responded it was roads and utilities. There are maintenance crews that take care of snow plowing and maintenance of the streets. There is a sanitary sewer system and storm sewer system. There is also the rehabilitation of the utilities. The City tries to do one to three projects a year rehabbing the utilities and streets on the street right of way. Working through Mr. Kullander facilities maintenance and trail maintenance that don't fall under streets or utilities.

Commissioner Morris said he would like to commend the young staff member who has worked on the rain gardens in the Somerset area. The rain gardens have been very beneficial and is a good green project. He has done a good job with the rain gardens. It has been a real success.

Mr. Mazzitello said he would pass the information along to Mr. Ruzek and Mr. Kuchinka who did most of the work. The rain gardens have been a tremendous success with the street projects and more are planned throughout the City.

Commissioner Morris said they are a really good thing. They look nice and serve a real purpose.

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Commissioner Kraus asked if money was still available through Dakota County for rain garden projects.

Mr. Mazzitello said he would check. There was money available last year.

TRAIL REQUEST FOR MINNESOTA CONSTITUTIONAL DOLLARS

Mr. Sedlacek said there were more voters of Minnesota voted on the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment than on any other candidate or issue in Minnesota. 1.6 million voters voted yes and 1.1 million voters voted no. It did create dedicated funding. The tax will begin to be collected on July 1, 2009. 33% of all revenues will go to a newly created outdoor heritage fund to be spent to restore, protect and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests and habitat for game, fish and wildlife. 33% of the clean water fund will be spent to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers; streams and groundwater (with at least 5% of the fund to be spent to protect drinking water sources). 14.25% will be spent on parks and trails with funds to be spent to only support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance. 19.75% will fund a newly created arts and cultural heritage fund to be spent only for arts, arts education, and arts access and to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage.

In order to acquire any of this funding it will not be through a grant but through submitting a bill to the legislature. There is only one oversight body to oversee all four areas of the amendment. Outdoor heritage fund requests are due by April 1st. The funding is unknown since taxes aren't being collected yet. There is no deadline for the other funds. It is thought to have requests for the other funds in by April 1st. There are areas in the City in terms of heritage and linkage. They are the Minnesota River Trail and the Northern Urban Regional Trail (NURT) that are not linked yet. They are two choking points; the NURT trail along Dodd Road to Valley Park and the Minnesota River Trail from Valley Park to Highway 13. Easements are needed to finish connecting the trails.

Mr. Kullander reported the plans were authorized by City Council a year and half ago. The plans are completed acquiring easements are being work on. The grants could be applied for to construct them.

Mr. Sedlacek said a proposal will be put together for both trails. There should be no impact on the Special Park Fund or the City's General Fund.

Commissioner Kraus commented it was great to get funding for new trails but what about money for maintenance of the trails once they are built.

Commissioner Morris commented that some of the trails are past rehabbing and need to be built from the ground up. Valley Creek is one of the trails that is wash boarding.

Commissioner Craighead said a few years ago \$10,000 was spent for maintenance of the trails.

Mr. Kullander said there is now \$45,000 in the budget for maintenance of the trails.

Commissioner Kraus asked if that is enough money to keep up with what needs to be done for the trails.

Mr. Kullander said is was not. Council decides on the budgeted amount for maintenance of the trails.

Commissioner Morris said there is a new administration for the Land and Water Conservation Fund on the Federal side for enhancing parks. Money may be loosened up and they match funds 50%. The DNR may

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get some money from the Feds and that should be kept in mind. The funds come from the gas tax and offshore leasing tax.

Chair Portz said it was a good update and information.

Chair Portz asked a guest if he wanted to speak at the meeting.

Mr. Alan Anderson came to observe the meeting because he saw the article looking for a new Commissioner. He did not know what the Parks and Recreation Commission did.

DISCUSSION OF EUGENIA AVENUE

Mr. Sedlacek said City Council has entertained a request to vacate a 30 foot right-of-way by Highway 13 north of Sylvandale. The request was made by Brian Brunette, 591 Hiawatha Avenue, to vacate half of the alley behind his property and all of Eugenia. It is a landlocked parcel of land. Eugenia Avenue was platted in 1924 with the Cherokee Heights Parks subdivision. In 1988, with the subdivision to the south, the Ivy Falls 2nd subdivision, it was decided that Eugenia Avenue was not needed as a street by the City Council. Instead of having the subdivision dedicate 30 feet for a full right-of-way they allowed the developer to integrate the land into the lots.

Between 588 and 597 Sutcliff Circle there is a 10 foot easement on each lot that is for utilities, on December 6, 1988, Council referred to this easement as a potential for a future trail.

The individual at 591 Hiawatha Avenue on February 7, 1989, asked for a vacation of the rest of Eugenia Ave. The Council at that time discussed whether it was necessary to have a trail connection through there. The Council opted at that time not to vacate Eugenia. The Council felt at that time it may serve a purpose in the future for a trail connection. This same discussion has come up to the current Council.

The question Council is now weighing is it better to vacate this property or preserve it for a future use? It is now used as a walking path. Council thought it appropriate to ask the Parks and Recreation Commission to weigh in on the matter as there have been discussions in the past with the Parks and Recreation Commission. Is this a viable trail section?

Commissioner Morris asked about the other parcel with the 20 foot easement and if the homeowners had encroached on the right-of-way on each lot.

Mr. Sedlacek said part of the discussion in 1989 was that the trail would be awfully tight between the two homes. The homes might be right up to the 10 foot right-of-way.

Commissioner Craighead asked if Eugenia Avenue was now grass.

Mr. Sedlacek said Mr. Brunette's portion was maintained by him and the other portion is not maintained as well.

Chair Portz said people are walking through there now.

Commissioner Morris said he would like to hear from the other landowners about putting a trail through there. The two landowners on the 20 foot easement would probably not be happy about a trail going through their property.

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Commissioner Kraus pointed out that the other homes on the Sutcliff cul-de-sac would be impacted if a trail were built between the two homes. There would be 10 homes impacted. What does that landowner propose to prevent foot traffic through that yard? Can an easement be granted to the homeowner to put up a fence for security reasons and keep the rest of the property for a future trail?

Mr. Sedlacek said if the property were vacated the homeowner is going to landscape and fence the property. The City does not allow a homeowner to put up a fence on City right-of-way.

Commissioner Kraus said if Eugenia Avenue were vacated there would be one option left for a trail that is not a desirable option.

Commissioner Morris asked if the property owner has had acts of vandalism.

Mr. Sedlacek responded there were two break-ins reported - one in 2006 and the other in 2008.

Commissioner Morris said it's not a false request. It would be nice to retain the property for a trail in the future with the wooded area on the other side of Highway 13 and asked who owned the property.

Mr. Sedlacek responded there are five lots off of Sutcliff and St. Paul Regional Park.

Commissioner Morris said it could be a potential link to St. Paul and beyond.

Mr. Sedlacek said it's a steep link.

Commissioner Craighead said he rides his bike on the other side of Highway 13 – not on the side with the homes.

Mr. Kullander said there is a gravel trail on the other side of Highway 13 with an access gate to an overlook. It is an unknown area. It's the Vento trail.

Commissioner Craighead commented that the homeowner could let the right-of-way go natural that would help improve security. He also said he didn't recall talking about this in the past and he's been on the Commission for 10 years. There is a map that identified potential sites for trails.

Mr. Kullander said this site was a low priority for a trail.

Commissioner Craighead said he wouldn't want the land as a trail. It would not be a good idea to have bikers cross Highway 13 at that area.

Commissioner O'Brien asked if people were using it for exercise or taking a short cut.

Mr. Sedlacek responded there are different thoughts on it. It was mentioned that it is a teen hangout. Avid walkers do use it to get to the St. Paul Park. Mr. Sedlacek asked if the Parks and Recreation wanted to make a motion to the City Council regarding this property.

Commissioner O'Brien said she didn't have enough information to make a recommendation to the City Council and would like to hear from people about this.

Commissioner Morris agreed and would hate to lose the land.

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Chair Portz said the property owners effected by this decision were at the last City Council meeting to talk about the issue and can be watched on the webcast. If there is a security issue that issue needs to be addressed. He also doesn't remember discussing it. It would be a shame to give up the land.

Commissioner Kraus said he would also like to see the map of potential trails.

Mr. Sedlacek said the City Council is discussing this item at their second meeting in April and the master trail plan could be brought to the next Parks meeting.

Commissioner Morris said there is future plans for the Vento overlook.

Mr. Sedlacek said more information would be on the agenda at the next Parks and Recreation meeting.

REVIEW OF CURRENT WEB CONTENT

Mr. Sedlacek reported that an email address has been set up to send comments about the parks. The email address is lovetheparks@mendota-heights.com The email address did not make it in the Heights Highlites. There have been no comments submitted yet.

Commissioner Craighead remarked that he was pleased to see the extent of the content on the website.

Mr. Sedlacek said cudos should go to Teresa for keeping the information update. The City is hoping to redesign the website in the future.

Chair Portz asked if the webmaster was an employee or contract employee.

Mr. Sedlacek responded a part-time employee updates the website but can not make major changes to it.

Commissioner Kraus commented there is a lot of great content. There is a lot of clicking to get to information and the website is confusing. There is no information about the Pilot Knob site.

Commissioner Morris suggested contacting a university to build a website. It looks good for a portfolio for a student.

Commissioner Kraus asked if statistics were kept about the website.

Mr. Sedlacek said no.

Commissioner Kraus said that would be something to keep in mind when designing a new website.

PAR 3 ANNUAL REPORT

Chair Portz said the annual report was a good format. There was an operating profit for the year of \$30,000 with a total revenue of \$186,000.

Mr. Sedlacek reported that a pro-forma is being developed for 2009 that was proposed by Councilmember Vitelli.

Chair Portz asked if the pro-forma would be a budget for next year.

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Mr. Sedlacek responded it would be a budget pro-forma. Last year a monthly expenditures cash flow worksheet was used. What was not in there was an estimate to budget month by month for revenues or expenditures and administrative costs weren't budgeted in month by month. That was about \$19,000. 2009 will be an interesting year for the Par 3 with the economy.

2008 had a number of capital expenses. The projection of 2009 needs to be added to the annual report. The anticipated capital expenses for 2009 is \$30,000. The roof of the clubhouse is a major concern. We are not going to touch it unless we have to. There is \$7,000 budgeted for replacing a mower. There will be landscaping expenses such as cleaning up the trees.

Chair Portz said it's a good value and cheapest green fees in the twin cities. Market ideas have come from the greens committee.

Commissioner O'Brien asked about the status of the greens committee.

Chair Portz said the greens committee brought in a volunteer landscape architect. Money has been budgeted for planting flowers by the clubhouse. The greens committee is meeting again on February 19th.

Mr. Sedlacek said a concept plan is being brought to the greens committee at the February 19th meeting. When the plan gets finalized it will then go to Council for bidding.

Core users of the golf course are from the area – Mendota Heights, Eagan and West St. Paul residents. People will drive by other golf courses to golf the Par 3 because it is a fun, laid back course.

The clubhouse manager is returning and so is the maintenance manager. Mr. Perkins understands the nature of the course and there will be birthday party offerings, an open and an invitational is being planned while keeping the down home feel that it has had.

Commissioner Craighead suggested posting the youth tournament information on the website.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Craighead commented that this would be his last meeting.

There were no further comments.

Commissioner Kraus made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Morris seconded the motion.

AYES 7

NAYS 0

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 P.M.