

Approved

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

PARKS AND RECREATION MEETING

June 9, 2009

The June 2009 meeting of the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, June 9, 2009, in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, 1101 Victoria Curve. The meeting was called to order at 6:48 P.M.

The following Commissioners were present, Chair Paul Portz, Commissioners: Maureen Brackey, Michael Toth, Liz O'Brien, Ray Morris and Steve Commers. Commissioner Tom Kraus was excused. Staff present were: Jake Sedlacek, Assistant to the City Administrator, Guy Kullander, Parks Project Manager, and Nancy Bauer, Recording Secretary.

PILOT KNOB SITE TOUR

Chair Portz reported that five Parks and Recreation Commissioners and Mr. Kullander went on a tour of the Pilot Knob site given by Mr. Wiley Buck. It has a beautiful view of downtown Minneapolis. Deer and a flock a turkeys were seen. Everyone in the community should go visit the site.

Commissioner Brackey asked how someone could find the site.

Mr. Kullander responded that if they use a Google search for 2044 Pilot Knob Road or 2100 Pilot Knob for the address. Acacia Cemetery is well known and if someone goes to the entrance of Acacia Cemetery and then go north it will take you right to the site.

A dedication ceremony is planned for June 25th at 11:30 A.M. at the Pilot Knob site. The ceremony is to recognize the contribution from the Minnesota Historical Society for two interpretative monument signs. Also, the stakeholders and partners that helped fund the phase II purchase and the volunteer efforts of corporate sponsors and individuals that have helped with restoration efforts will be recognized.

Chair Portz said the dedications are well done with speakers and food.

MINUTES

The minutes for the May meeting were approved with two minor changes.

Commissioner Commers made a motion to approve the minutes.

Commissioner Morris seconded the motion.

AYES: 6

NAYS: 0

RECREATION REPORT

Mr. Sedlacek reported that Ms. Gangelhoff should be given credit for the parks celebration. It started out Friday night with the band 6 below and a Twins game shown at Town Center. TC the Bear entertained spectators. It started out with a lot of people and he did not know how many people stuck around to see the end of the game as it ended at 12:45.

Chair Portz reported that he was there and it was cold and windy.

Mr. Sedlacek reported that it was a successful event and the City would try to do it again.

He continued that Mendota Heights was mentioned on national television. The announcers gave a “shout out” to everyone in Mendota Heights watching the game outdoors at Market Square Park and wished success with the City’s park celebration.

On Saturday the 5K was held with 260 participants – the most ever. It was won by a 19 year old at 16 minutes and some seconds.

A special thank you goes to Chair Portz and Commissioner Toth, who braved the weather, and help with the set up of the bike rodeo and the Parks Celebration on Saturday morning. It started at noon. It was the rainiest and maybe coldest celebration ever held.

Ms. Gangelhoff should have the list of contributions at the next meeting.

Youth trips that are being held are on Thursdays this summer. On June 18th is the Twin game, June 25th is the Edina Aquatic Center, July 9th is the Minnesota Zoo, July 16th is the Apple Valley Aquatic Center, July 23rd is Valleyfair, July 30th is Cascade Bay and August 6th is at the West St. Paul pool. To check availability of the trips go on line at the City website.

Skateboard camp is being held by 3rd Lair on July 27th to July 31st. All ages and abilities are welcome.

The Fishing Derby is July 8th at Rogers Lake. After the derby a band will be playing. There are still a few spots open.

The tennis programs are going and a lot of participants are signed up.

Summer playground programs are a hit. The programs started on recommendations from Commissioners Brackey and O’Brien.

Golf programs are popular. The Wednesday junior league is full. There are some openings on the Monday leagues. The golf camps and lessons are popular with a few openings.

The performances in the parks are set. Tomorrow night is at Henry Sibley High School with the Alphabits Band along with the ECFE trucks and travel show. One June 18th at Market Square the Mayflies are playing. On July 8th after the fishing derby playing is the Halls of Magic. On July 16th at Market Square Park is the Clearwater Hot Club with Connie Evingson – she is a jazz signer. On Wednesday August 19th at Mendakota Park the Leroy’s River Minstrels –and free root beer floats will be given out. And on August 20th at Market Square Park the Andra Suchy Band will be playing.

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Summer Playhouse starts Monday June 15th 1:30 to 2:00 P.M. This is a free event for kids and held at Marie and Mendakota Parks.

Safety camp is August 11, 12 and 13 at Kaposia Park in South St. Paul. Safety camp is full but a waiting list is being taken.

The Minnesota Thunder soccer camp is July 6th through 10th all day long at Kensington Park.

On-line registration is going well and folks are encouraged to use it and see what programs still have openings. .

2010 CAPITAL PARKS AND/OR TRAIL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Mr. Kullander reported that park capital improvement projects have been talked about and what could be requested for the 2010 budget. Recommendations should be made to give to the City Council in July when the budget talks start. Some of the questions have been - where the ideas for the projects have come from and how were they selected. The memo discusses some of these questions. There is a list of 80 projects included in the memo that were ranked in 2007 by me, Commissioners and Public Works Park employees. All the rankings were taken into consideration and the project list was pared down to 32 projects. The 32 projects were then put in a five year capital plan. Some of the projects were constructed in 2008 and 2009.

The Friendly Hills project is 95% completed. The reconstruction at Victoria Highlands is underway.

The projects talked about last month at the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting should be higher in the needs list. None of the projects are safety issue related. They would be beneficial projects in the long run. The backstop at Friendly Hills would benefit the Mendota Heights Athletic Association. The backstop at Hagstrom King Park was done this year and turned out well.

Commissioner Morris asked if the backstop could be funded by rehab money in the Public Works budget.

Mr. Kullander responded that the money levied for maintenance in the parks is for fixing things that are broken, maintaining equipment, turf maintenance and capital improvement projects should come from Special Parks Fund. Council during the last three years have funded 50% of capital improvement projects from cell tower revenue and the other 50% from Special Parks Funds.

Valuations in the City are going down and the tax levy has been capped for next year so there are unknown questions for next year's City budget.

Commissioner Commers asked if the sun shelter on the list had been done.

Mr. Kullander responded that it has not been done at Hagstrom King Park but one will be installed at Victoria Highlands this year along with the playground replacement.

Commissioner Toth asked about the upgrading of the playground at Mendakota Park – if it was just for 2-5 year old play equipment.

Mr. Kullander responded that those are the upgrades that are referred to. The playground equipment was installed in 1990 and it has held up well. A couple of elements were replaced.

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Commissioner Toth asked when the other equipment may need to be replaced.

Mr. Kullander responded that the play equipment is holding up well and has a good longevity. There is still pea rock there and is not totally handicapped accessible.

Chair Portz said he looked at the equipment and it looks solid and could be left along for awhile. 2-5 year old play equipment would be a good addition.

Commissioner Morris asked the current balance of the Special Park Fund.

Mr. Kullander responded with the Mendota Plaza development the total would be about \$300,000 less the two projects underway so at the end of the year the balance would be about \$240,000.

Commissioner O'Brien said someone who plays a lot of tennis at the Friendly Hills tennis courts said the surface is pretty beat up and asked if resurfacing would be done at all tennis courts.

Mr. Kullander responded that one tennis court would be resurfaced. There are five double tennis courts and Valley Park has the sports tiles installed on the court. The rest are asphalt surfaces and were built in the 70's. To resurface a tennis court would cost about \$12,000 to \$13,000 per park. To do patching of the courts it would cost about \$11,000 to do all the four courts. There is \$11,000 in the budget this year to do crack sealing and touch up of the tennis courts. To do tennis court in sport tiles would cost about \$45,000 to \$49,000. All the tennis courts are about in the same shape – except for the sport tiles court in Valley Park.

Commissioner O'Brien asked which court he would recommend for sport tiles.

Mr. Kullander responded it would be Friendly Hills Park because it is in the poorest condition.

Commissioner Morris asked if the tiles were holding up good.

Mr. Kullander said it is.

Commissioner Morris said it is a worthwhile project to do with a different playing surface. His recommendation to Council for the 2010 budget would be the sport tiles on a tennis court and the Mendakota Park equipment upgrade for 2-5 year olds.

Commissioner Toth asked if it would be feasible to split the project in half to do half the equipment now and half the equipment later.

Mr. Kullander said that is what he is suggesting.

Commissioner Toth said replacing all the play equipment would be an expensive project.

Mr. Kullander said it cost 20 years ago about \$150,000 to install the play equipment. To do that same project today would cost about \$250,000.

Commissioner O'Brien asked if he knew what people thought of a multi use field at Friendly Marsh Park.

Mr. Kullander said Mr. Blum in Public Works reported that he preps two park fields - one at Ivy Park and one at Victoria Highland and no one is using the fields. The age bracket that uses the field may have grown

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older. There are some excess fields now. The Friendly Hills Marsh Park could be a lower priority right now and then when the demand goes up it could be looked at then.

Commissioner O'Brien suggested tabling the multi use field until the plaza development is finished.

Commissioner Morris said half the balance of the Special Park Fund would be spent to develop the fields at Friendly Marsh Park and that amount of money shouldn't be spent right now. He also asked if the Opus development was completely built out.

Mr. Kullander responded that it was built out.

Commissioner Morris said more funding wouldn't be coming into the Special Park Funds for awhile.

Mr. Kullander said Mr. Sedlacek and Ms. Gangelhoff will be looking at the field usage in the fall. Friendly Marsh Park should be a lower priority on the list right now.

Chair Portz said it is a good discussion and the Commissioners should rank the projects and turn them into Mr. Kullander after the meeting.

Mr. Kullander said that Mr. Sedlacek reminded him the Parks and Recreation Commission in past years have taken July off because things are slow for the Commission.

Commissioner O'Brien asked Mr. Kullander what his recommendation was for the top two projects and staff's thoughts.

Mr. Kullander responded that he was partial to the Mendakota Park project because it is the crown jewel of the parks system and doing a restoration and management plan for Valley Park would be second. Mendakota Park gets a lot of kids.

Commissioner O'Brien commented that the program in the parks is at Mendakota Park and kids will be visiting the park.

Commissioner Commers made a motion that the Parks Commission recommends to the City Council give the money to work on Mendakota Park for 2-5 year old parks play equipment.

Mr. Kullander responded that a motion wasn't needed but recommendations on what projects should be done. He would then prepare a feasibility report describing the projects and budgets.

Commissioner Morris suggested a tennis court with a different playing surface sport tile would be a cost effective solution for a tennis court. Tennis courts have not been addressed for years.

Mr. Sedlacek reminded the Commission that there was a motion on the floor and a second was needed before discussion.

Commissioner Morris seconded the motion.

Mr. Sedlacek said the motion was to recommend to City Council the 2-5 year old play equipment be upgraded at Mendakota Park.

Approved

Commissioner Brackey asked if in addition to the 2-5 year old play equipment be upgraded does it include removing the pea rock.

Mr. Kullander responded no – it would be just upgrading about 1/3 of the area with the 2-5 year old play equipment.

Commissioner Morris made a friendly amendment to the motion to recommend putting in sport tiles at a tennis court.

Commissioner Commers said he would not accept the friendly amendment.

Chair Portz reminded the Commission that the motion was to upgrade the 2-5 year old play equipment at Mendakota Park.

AYES 6
NAYS 0

Chair Portz asked about the restoration and management plan for Valley Park. He biked through the park and didn't realize how big the park was.

Mr. Kullander responded that Valley Park was purchased in the late 60's or early 70's. The only improvements done to the park was upgrading the dirt trail and ball park. Invasive plants are in the park and it used to be oak savannah similar to the Pilot Knob site. There are some pockets of native plants. The idea is to commission a planning study for the restoration of Valley Park. A 10 to 15 year plan would be laid out with costs. Grants could be applied for because is it along the Mississippi corridor. Grants can't be applied for until there is a plan in place.

Chair Portz asked if Wiley Buck looked at Valley Park.

Mr. Kullander responded that he had. A study would cost about \$19,000 and funding could not come from the Special Parks Fund. Tax levies would be used to fund the study. Council may not approve the study.

Chair Portz said once the plan was in place grant money could be applied for. There is a lot of potential for grant money because of its location in the river corridor and with the regional trail going through it and connection to the Big Rivers Regional Trail.

Mr. Kullander said he wasn't sure how the Council would react to the recommendation. The park has been left to nature. It would be a 10-20 year effort to restore the park.

Chair Portz said no one goes to Pilot Knob. Valley Park is used a lot and is in the center of the City. With a little seed money more money could be obtained through grants.

Mr. Kullander said it's in a good location with the confluence of several trails. If Council orders the study then Council would also need to hire a firm to apply for grants and manage reconstruction efforts.

Commissioner O'Brien asked if Valley Park was Chair Portz's second priority from the list of projects.

Chair Portz responded that the more he thought and talked about it he realized how big the park was and the more he liked the idea of a restoration plan for Valley Park. He suggested the Commission go through the

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list of projects and Commissioners could make a motion on projects they think would be worth while recommending to the City Council. He then asked if anyone wanted to make a motion on the backstop at Friendly Hills Park.

Commissioner O'Brien said she could go either way on two projects.

Commissioner Morris made a motion to recommend to the City Council to resurface a tennis court using sport tiles in a different playing surface at Mr. Kullander's recommendation.

The motion failed for a lack of a second.

Commissioner Commers said the sport tiles are a wonderful thing. But doing a court in sport tiles in the hard economic times is not worthwhile right now. Sibley High School and Visitation School have tennis courts that can be used by residents and are in very good condition.

Commissioner Brackey asked if trees were donated by the Mom's Club for shade at Hagstrom King Park.

Mr. Kullander responded they did donate \$400 to buy two trees that are about 15 to 18 feet tall.

Chair Portz said he would like to see how the sun shelter goes over at Victoria Highlands Park before investing in another one.

Chair Portz asked if someone would like to make a motion to replace the backstop at Friendly Hills Park.

Commissioner Toth made a motion to make a recommendation to the City Council to replace the backstop at Friendly Hills Park.

Commissioner Brackey seconded the motion.

AYES 6

NAYS 0

Chair Portz asked for a motion for the development of the mutli use field at the Friendly Marsh Park.

No one made a motion.

Commissioner Toth asked about the "You are Here" signs.

Mr. Kullander responded that 10 signs have been installed and there are two more to be installed. It would cost about \$3,000 to \$4,000 to make and install four more. A total of 24 or 25 were planned for the whole city.

Commissioner Brackey asked if he would like to see four more signs made and installed for \$3,000.

Mr. Kullander responded it costs about \$1,000 for the concrete footings to install the two existing signs.

Commissioner Toth asked if it was \$1,600 to install the signs.

Mr. Kullander responded that the first 12 signs cost about \$7,000 to \$8,000 to manufacture and install them.

Approved

Chair Portz said it's about \$700 a piece and asked if there was a motion for the "You are Here" signs.

No motion was made.

Commissioner Toth asked about the cost for the sun shelter at Hagstrom King Park.

Mr. Kullander responded it would be about \$10,000 to \$12,000.

Commissioner Brackey suggested that the sun shelter project should be revisited after seeing the Victoria Highlands sun shelter.

Commissioner Morris said there is Federal Government money for a limited time. When things get better the government side will get worse. This may be a good time to tackle a restoration and management plan. There may be a window to get significant stuff done.

Mr. Kullander said the new sales tax fund may help fund future projects.

Commissioner Morris said invasive species in an area will get worse. There are serious issues with Valley Park and it will get a lot worse. There may significant funds to do the work. This project was talked about four years ago by the Commission.

Commissioner Brackey said based on the location of the park – against residential homes – would be a great educational opportunity for what is invasive and natural. Pilot Knob is out of the way but Valley Park is right in the neighborhood. It's a unique and important opportunity.

Commissioner Toth said Valley Park was down on his list as one of the least desirable projects until visiting the Pilot Knob site. The view of the downtown area and watching some of the new plants growing and listening to what is going on there is enjoyable. The discussion about bringing the park back to life is more desirable.

Commissioner Morris said the invasive vegetation won't stay just in the park and will encroach in people's yards.

Commissioner Commers asked how the invasive species would be taken care of – would it be a controlled burn.

Commissioner Morris said there a number of different ways to get rid of invasive species. It's tough work but it does work.

Commissioner Brackey made a motion to recommend that the City Council commission a study for the restoration and management plan for Valley Park.

Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. He also said if the City Council does approve this project then 50% of the funding should come from the Special Park Fund.

Mr. Kullander said it doesn't work that way. Special Parks Funds are spent on capital improvements projects and this is not a capital improvement project.

Approved

Chair Portz said he was thinking the same thing about spending Special Parks Funds for the management plan.

Mr. Kullander said Special Parks Funds may be spent in the future for such items as trails, viewing docks over the ponds and restoration efforts.

Commissioner Morris said it should be stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission feels strongly about this study.

Chair Portz said when the state sales tax law was passed last year I was saying we need to look for opportunities to use that money. We need to take advantage of some of the funds. This project may fit in there along with other grants.

Commissioner Morris said the Commission would be willing to spend money in the future on this project. Spending \$20,000 now may blow that into a bigger figure with other funds and grants down the road.

Chair Portz asked for any further discussion. There being none he asked for a vote.

AYES 5

NAYS 1 (Commerz)

Chair Portz asked if the Commissioners wanted to add any other projects to discuss.

Commissioner Toth asked about the parking in the grassy area at Mendakota Park.

Mr. Kullander said the City owns the land but Xcel has easements on the property so a permanent structure cannot be built on the land.

PAR 3

Mr. Sedlacek handed out a twelve-month profit and loss projection sheet. The Par 3 has had a very good year so far. There is a \$10,107 net profit so far for the year. Two columns have been filled in so far – April and May. For May there have been \$20,873 in green fees. The revenue is broken down for rentals, pop, beer, food, concessions, golf supplies and league fees which came to \$26,541.

The cost of goods are clubhouse salaries, maintenance contract, leases, (cart), concessions, beer, equipment repair, utility, maintenance of course and building. Total costs of goods for May were \$18,187.

Expenses include supplies, outside services, telephone, gas, utilities, membership dues and other expenses. Expenses for May were \$2,464. The net profit for May was \$5,890.

We have received one letter and three voice mails commending the condition of the course and staff.

Commissioner Morris asked if there was any negative feedback.

Mr. Sedlacek responded none.

Chair Portz said the staff at Par 3 is really enthusiastic and especially Tom Perkins.

Approved

Commissioner Morris said the report has a nice P & L layout and asked what the membership dues are. Mr. Sedlacek responded we are a member of the Minnesota Golf Course Association (MGA) and the Superintendents Association. They give us a lot of golf information.

Commissioner O'Brien said she picked up her kids from the golf course and every kid came out with something.

Mr. Sedlacek reported that the camps started this week. It's a relaxing and laid back course.

Commissioner Toth said he has seen families enjoying the course.

Commissioner Brackey asked where the landscaping plan was at.

Mr. Sedlacek said it needs to go back to the City Council for purchase order approval and plant selection needs to be clarified.

Chair Portz said the season is moving along and it needs to be worked on.

Commissioner Commers asked if the Parks and Recreation Commission needs to meet in July to get the landscape plan resolved.

Mr. Sedlacek said it has already been approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Commers asked Mr. Kullander if the sheets needed to be filled with their rankings of projects.

Mr. Kullander responded no – that was just background information.

Commissioner Commers asked about the fountain in the pond at Ivy Hills Parks.

Mr. Kullander responded that it pops up every once in awhile – residents ask for one to get rid of the algae. It would cost \$4,000 to \$5,000 to install a pump and electricity. The question is – is the cost worth it to get rid of the algae?

Commissioner Commers asked if it could be run on a battery.

Mr. Kullander responded yes solar powered units are made but it would also be prone to pranksters.

Commissioner Morris said solar powered fountains are expensive. Also, algae is from residents treating their lawns.

Commissioner Commers asked if there the City could use less fertilizer around the pond.

Commissioner Morris said it's also up to the residents to stop using fertilizers also.

Mr. Kullander responded that the drainage area into the pond is 150 acres and the park is only seven or 8 acres. There is drainage from as far as Dodd Road and the City doesn't use fertilizer in the park only on the ballfield, and there is zero phosphorus.

Approved

Chair Portz reported that he went on a police ride along a couple of weeks ago. After 15 minutes in the squad the radio started going and things started happening fast. The City has a good police department. He was busy for the four hours he was on the ride along.

Mr. Sedlacek asked if the Commission wanted to cancel their July meeting.

Commissioner Morris made a motion for a recommendation to the City Council that the Parks and Recreation Commission cancel their July meeting.

Commissioner Commers seconded the motion.

AYES 6

NAYS 0

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner O'Brien made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Commissioner Brackey seconded the motion.

AYES 6

NAYS 0

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 P.M.