

**WEST ST. PAUL PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Tuesday, July 13, 2021**

**Parks & Rec. Members Present:** Bob Gausman, Kirsten Mulraney, Bonnie Bellows, Mike Petrasek, Sara Blair, Kelly Gibbons, Kelly Hagler

**Non-voting Members Present:** Sharon G. Hatfield, Parks and Public Works Administrative Specialist; Dave Schletty, Assistant Parks & Recreation Director; Wendy Berry, Council Liaison

**1. ROLL CALL**

**2. REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES**

Chair Petrasek called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm. The Committee approved the minutes from the May 11, 2021 meeting. The Committee with one correction approved the minutes from the June 8, 2021 work session: on page 4, paragraph 1, "...the closest facility is Hwy. 36 and White Bear Avenue.

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. 2022 Playground Replacement Discussion**

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Schletty asked the Committee to discuss and plan playground replacement for 2022; there is a budget of \$110K. Member Mulraney talked about Kennedy Park and the wish to install a unique playground with natural fixtures like big boulders. Member Bellows asked Schletty to name the parks in most need of replacement. Schletty replied, the pool park, Kennedy Park and then Dodd Park. The next parks in most need of repair are Oakdale and Weschcke. Petrasek said that he is interested in Kennedy Park. The current playground in Kennedy sits in both West St. Paul and St. Paul, and over the city sewer line.

Bellows asked about the price of new playground equipment in Kennedy Park. Schletty replied that he has not researched the cost of a natural features playground. The regular playground would be \$70 K; if the City were to replace the playground with exactly the same unit, it would be about \$40-50K. Mulraney asked about the placement and fencing needed for a playground at Dodd Park. Schletty said, typically the City installs timbers for playground boundaries. The City has to work with the Community Development Department in order to plan for a new playground in Dodd Park; it is located in the potential future redevelopment area of the Doddway Shopping Center. Petrasek suggested that Members look at the park individually and discuss the playground replacements next month. Member Gibbons said that with the new apartment complex [former K-Mart site] being built across from the pool, there would be many more children living nearby. Schletty said that the new complex would have a private pool and maybe a private playground as well. He will follow up with this. Bellows asked Schletty to follow up with the Park Maintenance Lead to see if he had any recommendations.

**4. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Marthaler Redevelopment Update**

Schletty said he met with the consultant a few weeks ago. Last night, (Schletty said) Council approved the agreement to hire WSB as the consultant to facilitate the finish of the Master Plan and through Phase I construction. Bids for construction would be out in January/February. The City will work on final plans for Phase I this December. Ideally, there is would be a public input meeting in late August/early September. The draft plan may be ready by August. Petrasek said with the new apartment building on Wentworth Ave, (as Gibbons talked about) there would be more stress on Marthaler Park, which is good. Schletty said the WSB consultant may come to the August meeting to prepare the Committee for the public input meeting.

Schletty informed the Committee that the new trail section in Marthaler Park has been finished. Today the new sidewalk is going to be poured for the connection to Humboldt Avenue. The next step is the restoration work, (grass, leveling off) to the trail. The next phase would be the Garlough Park trail. The construction company is making a lot of progress. All the trees have been removed, and they are halfway through the grading work. They are on schedule to wrap things up by the end of July. Petrasek said that the work has been accomplished at warp speed. Schletty said that Member Lynch reminded him it is

important to clear the buckthorn in order to restore the views of the wetlands. This will be done with the grant funding for wetland restoration.

**b. Art Park Update**

Petrasek reported that the subcommittee has met twice since the June meeting. The plan now is to build a little free library in the Art Park. Travis Olson has designed the free library feature for the park. It has two compartments. The smaller compartment will have activities like chalk for sidewalk art. The bigger side will hold books for a free library. The hope is to install the library in September. The cost would be \$500-\$600.

**c. Skate Park Update**

Mulraney said there is a new Instagram site, 5511Sk8 for the skate park initiative. She is learning how to share Facebook items with the Instagram site. Mulraney commented that the child riding his skateboard on the park table on the Instagram account is a good argument for a new skate park. There was a subcommittee meeting in Harmon Park; the effort has a lot of support and the subcommittee will build on it.

**d. Continued Horseshoe Court Discussion**

Schletty continued the discussion on how the City could reimagine the horseshoe court space and generate more revenue. The function of the court could be expanded. The court right now is only being used twice a week from May to July. Otherwise, it is sitting empty and it is a big beautiful space that accommodate additional programming. Many people have reached out to City staff to use the space in other ways. Renters recently used the court for a concert series and dance parties. Other people have requested to use the space with their own tables and chairs. Schletty is exploring a different fee schedule for use of the horseshoe court as well. When the space was first built, there was a thriving horseshoe club based in West St. Paul. Now, it is mostly nonresidents using the space. Although the City receives nonresident rate fees, the small number is not enough to cover maintenance and electricity fees to run the facility. This new fee would be discussed with the horseshoe club and with Council before instituting. Bellows mentioned moving the horseshoe pits outside the structure. Schletty said that this is a possibility; however, it has added costs. The City would need to have a commitment from the Club for this addition. Gausman said that he liked the idea of the horseshoes. It is a cheap social activity. There could be a resurgence. Schletty said if the skate park were built near the horseshoe structure, it would be nice to have a picnic shelter nearby. Petrasek said that he would like the Horseshoe club members to come to the meeting and discuss the club use. He would like to see a per week fee. Member Hagler said that a more structured fee might encourage the club to increase their membership. Bellows said that the City needs to be very careful about taking away the amenity completely and the Committee needs to talk to the club. Petrasek said that he would invite the club to the August meeting.

**5. OTHER**

**a. Council Updates-NA**

**b. Community Gardens-**

Mulraney said that there is a lot of interest in putting in a community garden. A community garden does not have to cost the City any money. There are grants available. It would be mostly volunteer driven. Residents of Color Collective (ROCC) has talked about collaborating with this effort. Petrasek said that the City did have a community garden at Harmon Park. When Harmon Park was redeveloped, the garden moved to Garlough Park. Schletty said that interest in the garden waned after some time. People would rent a plot to do the gardening. Garlough School did have a community garden that was eliminated when the school redid their parking lot. Dodge Nature Center rents out plots, and some apartment buildings have plots for their renters. Petrasek said that a site needed to be identified. However, the community garden [concept] is not popular with residents that live nearby. There were protests opposing a community garden in Orme Park. The neighbors came in droves to protest. Gausman remarked that if

more money was spent, (on features like new black dirt and an attractive gate), the garden would be a big hit. With cheap fencing, people would not like it. Schletty said that the Environmental Committee had been looking at gardening option at the gas station across from Dodd Park. The raised bed garden has been started. The two gardening groups could work together. Gibbons asked how a community garden would work. Mulraney said that people who participate in the garden want to share food. There are risks. Hagler said it depends on how the garden is structured. Residents could rent individual plots or they could, work with ROCC and have a true community garden. Clpn. Berry asked if this initiative would be better suited for the Environmental Committee. Schletty said possibly, or a group could come forward and present a good proposal/pilot program to the Committee. Jade Pennig of the Environmental Committee had presented a plan for a raised bed garden in the Smith Dodd plot. If the garden were a true community garden, Schletty would like the community garden group to work with the Environmental Committee. Petrasek said that the Committee is supportive of this type of initiative. The group however, needs to form a proposal for the Committee and eventually to City Council.

**c. Pickleball Court, Emerson Park-** Bellows asked for an update on the pickleball court. Schletty replied that there have been some delays. The court is slated for late July to early August.

**d. Southview Park-** Bellows said that the park is huge and asked if something else could be installed in the park. Schletty said a lot of the park is programmed. It has a double tennis court and a full basketball court. There is park recreational programming for the green space a couple nights a week (t ball, soccer) and the police run a Wednesday free activity every week.

**e. National Night Out-** Member Blair asked about the parks role in the National Night Out program. Petrasek said there are many neighborhood picnics and gatherings that happen on that night. His cul-de-sac has a gathering. Council folks and the fire department visit with as many residents as they can.

**f. Staff Updates**

**i. Movies in the Park-**The City is holding its second Movie in the Park this Friday in Harmon Park. The movie will be "Trolls-World Tour." Splash Pad hours are extended for the event. The next Movie in the Park will be a movie in Spanish in Southview Park. The movie will probably be "Coco."

**ii. University of Minnesota class- Problems Solving for Environmental Change-** Schletty said this class is an upper level class in which a city will present a number of problems for the students to research and create a road map to solve the problems. The students will present the research and final report back to the city council. . The City of Hopkins was chosen last year. The problems Hopkins put forward included: GreenSteps advancement, zoning for sustainable buildings, right of way and public vegetation, outreach media campaign for urban forest, volunteer urban tree survey, bee lawns, climate change. Schletty asked Committee Members to email him if they had any topics they wanted the university to research. The city is chosen after review of the topics submitted to the university.

**6. ADJOURN**

The committee members adjourned at 6:51 pm. The next Parks and Recreation Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon G. Hatfield