

**WEST ST. PAUL PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

**5:30 pm, Tuesday, April 12, 2022
West St. Paul Council Chambers**

Parks & Rec Members Present: Luke Abrahamson, Pat Armon, Bonnie Bellows, Sara Blair, Teresa Smock, Emily Vergin

Excused: Dave Lynch, Kelly Gibbons, Kelly Hagler

Non-Voting Members Present: Wendy Berry, Council Liaison; Nate Burkett, City Manager; Sharon Hatfield, Administrative Specialist; Dave Schletty, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director

1. Roll Call-

2. Adopt Minutes

Co-chair Bellows called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. The February 8, 2022 minutes-were approved by the Committee.

3. New Business

a. **Introduce New Members-**The committee members introduced themselves to each other and welcomed four new members: Luke Abrahamson, Emily Vergin, Pat Armon, Teresa Smock.

b. **Intro and Summary of the Role of the Park & Rec Advisory Committee**

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Schletty provided documents to orientate new members and give a general outline of the role of the Committee. Nate Burkett, City Manager, introduced himself. He encouraged Members to think up the biggest, brightest, and best ideas and not consider the cost. He and the Council would like to hear the Committee's ideas and consider them. He said, "Shoot for the moon; if you miss, you'll hit the stars." He added that Council made a significant investment in recreation and a new person in the department will be starting soon.

Schletty summarized the role of the Committee. The Committee acts as an advisory to City Council on all matters of Parks and Recreation. The terms are for 2 years. The first duty is to do fact-finding tasks assigned by City Council. Another duty to act as an advisory to Council and to cooperate with other governmental agencies and groups in the advancement of park and recreation planning and programming. The Committee also periodically inventories the park system. Schletty said that the Committee follows Robert's Rules for meetings. These are standard procedures for conducting a meeting and voting. Part of open meeting law is that members need to be careful of communications outside of the regular committee meetings. Communications to all of the members of the committee must be sent to Schletty first. He will send out emails on blind copy to all of the meeting members. Public notice must be sent out for meetings of five or more members.

c. **Sub-Committees- Roles, Expectations Needs-**

Schletty said that a subcommittee would be four or less members (less than a quorum,) of the Committee. Subcommittees are formed to study or to work on a program. An example of this is the Art Park subcommittee. The subcommittee helped to establish the art park sculpture installed. Another subcommittee is the skate park subcommittee. The Art Park and Skate Park subcommittee have since disbanded because members have left the Committee. There is money on the capital improvement plan for a skate park to be

built in 2025. From time to time, a subcommittee is formed for an event, like the upcoming West St. Paul Days.

Schletty and Clpn. Berry talked about the Committee Expectations. They are “common sense,” and members are not required to sign the expectations document with the understanding that members have received and read the document. Member Blair talked about not knowing how to say things and participate during the meeting. Schletty said that expectation is that while the meeting is broadcast and the setting is formal, the conversation is meant to be informal. The City wants free-flowing conversation. It is open for dialog. Bellows encouraged everyone to speak up saying, “We like all sides.” Schletty said an example of this was the discussion regarding reinstalling basketball courts in the neighborhood parks.

d. **Sports Complex Blue Fence**

Schletty talked about the Sports Complex Park, (Oakdale and Wentworth Avenues.) There are two main areas in the park, the main part; the soccer and baseball fields, the horseshoe court and the large parking lot. About ten years ago, the City bought the adjoining property and built a new parking lot and playground and some greenspace. The area was low-lying; the City brought in some fill and built a nice blue fence along the parking lot. It serves as a safety buffer for children from the street. There have been issues with the fence from beginning. The fence is not completely level; it is “up and down.” Some fence posts have sunk; some fence posts have risen. The City worked with the contractor on the fence to resolve the issues for two years. City Staff thinks it may be time to remove the fence now that the plantings (day lilies and juniper bushes) have matured around the fence. Schletty asked the Committee for their opinions. Member Armon said that Council had issues with the fence the day after it was built. Member Vergin said that the only reason for the fence to stay is the child safety concern. She is wondering if more juniper bushes or other pollinator-friendly plantings could be added to the area. Schletty said that the temporary summer landscapers could introduce more vegetation. Bellows said that the fence is solid; it does not move. She commented that Vergin has a point. Until the plants shoot up, there is no safety barrier. Vergin asked if a landscape barrier could be created that would be there year-round. Armon would like to see the fence removed and a no maintenance barrier be installed. He suggested telling the sports association about the City’s plan.

Armon made a motion to remove the fence when the vegetation can safely serve the safety aspects of the fence. Vergin seconded the motion. Discussion followed. Vergin asked to table the discussion in order to hear from the sports associations and the landscaper. Armon withdrew his motion.

Vergin made a motion to table the discussion. Armon seconded the motion. The motion carried. All Ayes.

4. **Old Business**

a. **Explore West St. Paul Days-Update**

Schletty gave some background on the West St. Paul Days celebration. Originally, Celebrate West St. Paul was held on the second or third weekend in May, and sponsored

by the Robert Street Business Association. A different organization ran the event. The City did not have direct involvement in the running the event. The kickoff to the event was the City Open House. There was a West St. Paul Royalty aspect, and events like the citywide garage sale and the antique car shows were held in conjunction with the event. The organization that had been running the event tried to bring in new members. They could not attract new members to their group. The event was cancelled for two years with the pandemic. It was a good time for the City to take over the event. The event will be held in August and has been rebranded to “Explore West St. Paul Days.” On Thursday, there will be the Open House followed by a fireworks show. The next day there will be an evening parade. After the parade, there will be a Movie in the Dome. On Saturday, there will be a Fitness in the Park/Community Bike Ride. It will be the same weekend of the Mendota Heights Parks celebration. The City will coordinate the bike ride with Mendota Heights and the county. There will be a large arts/cultural and environmental event at Harmon Park at about 11:00am. A stage will be set up for local artists to perform. Different food vendors will set up tents in the park as well.

As part of the event, the city is planning an outdoor-sculpture contest. A selection committee will pick the top four entries. Residents would vote on the art pieces. The City will permanently display the winner’s art piece.

The Committee Members discussed ideas for the event.

The ideas included:

- Different age groups for the sculpture and other contests
- Scavenger hunt/ trivia contest
- Passport stamps book with different tree species rubbings

Schletty asked members to think about permanent locations for the winning sculpture.

Schletty said that the final event of the weekend would be a concert at the Sport Complex. The City has hired a group called PopRocks. There will be a large stage set up for them. Food trucks would also be at the event. There will be a beer garden set up in the horseshoe court. The date for the event is August 11, 12 and 13. If businesses or churches want to have an event associated with the celebration, they can pay a small fee to have their event listed with the West St. Paul Days advertising.

b. Continued 2022 Playground Replacement Discussion

Schletty said there are two parks that need to have playground replacement: the pool park and Kennedy Park. The Committee has been discussing nontraditional type playgrounds for these parks. Schletty showed examples of net climbing playgrounds. One was accessible for children on wheelchairs. He talked about the playground in Kennedy Park. It is situated in both West St. Paul and St. Paul, and located in the city easement above storm sewer pipes. There has been “pushback” from residents against relocating the playground into the green space of the park. Schletty proposed leaving the playground where it is and installing an all-natural playground built into the hill in Kennedy Park.

5. Other

a. Council Updates- NA

b. Staff Updates

- i. **Marthaler Master Plan Update-** The park renovation was scheduled to continue this year; the City has decided to postpone construction until 2023. The construction will be condensed into 1 ½ years. The majority of the construction will be done next year. The City was given an opportunity to apply for an Outdoor Recreation Grant through Dakota County. Their grant writer helped the City with the grant; the city will have an answer in early summer. The amount would be for \$300 K.
- ii. **Pollinator Grant Event-** May 14 is the kickoff date for the State Legacy Grant event for the River-to-River trail restoration (Marthaler and Garlough Parks.) The grant's objective is to remove all invasive species and replace them with native, pollinator friendly plants. The work will be done by volunteers; they will start in Garlough Park and then move onto Marthaler Park.
- iii. **Colorful Egg Hunt trail-** The trail will be held this Saturday. It will be a safe, socially distant event. There will be a DJ and the Easter Bunny to take pictures with the kids.
- iv. **New Recreation Specialist-** A new person has been hired for this position. She has experience working in recreation programming, facilities and with children.
- v. **Emerson Park-** Bellows asked about the fencing in Emerson Park. Schletty said a fence would be installed just inside the wood chip border at the park. It will be black coated vinyl fencing. Schletty talked about the playground at Emerson Park and its safety issues for very young children. The city is working with the playground manufacturer for modifications; they will be constructing a second platform off the current platform and reconfiguring the location of the climbing wall. The platform surface would be doubled and the potential collisions would be reduced.

6. Citizen Comments-NA

- 7. Adjournment-** The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon G. Hatfield