

WEST ST. PAUL PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
5:30 pm, Tuesday, May 10, 2022
West St. Paul Council Chambers

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

Excused: Kelly Gibbons

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

1. Roll Call

2. Adopt Minutes

Chair Lynch called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. The April 12, 2022 minutes were approved by the Committee.

3. New Business

a. Park Project Wish List

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Schletty reported that City management staff had met yesterday regarding the Capital Improvement Plan, (CIP). Schletty added two items: The first improvement was to pave the inside of the Orme Hockey rink with concrete. It would result in a better ice surface in winter and a multi-use surface for summer. The second improvement was to install a paved trail at Mud Lake. A new skate park was in the budget already. Another possible improvement would be a conversion of the horseshoe court.

Member Bellows asked for a map with the parks listed. Schletty said that he would send map to everyone. Member Vergin expressed interested in having one of the parks feature a food forest. It would encourage food knowledge and growing knowledge. It would be a monumental community effort because it would be something that the City could not do alone. It could feature perennial local food options as well as annual food like tomatoes and squash and have a teaching area. Lynch said this idea ties into the Environmental Committee. They are interested in having a subcommittee that ties both committees together. Bellows mentioned that she would like a new brochure to be done that features all of the parks, their features and the age levels for the features. Lynch mentioned the walking dirt path between holes three and four on the disc golf course. The path is worn down and tree roots have are exposed. He would like the walkway to be stabilized. Schletty said City should investigate the disc golf course globally and see if other improvements need to be made. Member Abrahamson asked about a sand volleyball court at the pool. Schletty said the volleyball court is something the City would like to accomplish this summer. Member Armon suggested building an observation tower and a zip line at Marthaler Park. Member Hagler suggested an indoor golf dome. Lynch said the City used to have an indoor golf facility where Lowes is located now. Member Smock suggested having free little libraries at each of the parks. Smock would like to see fully accessible playgrounds. This type of playground would need to be next to a parking lot for wheelchair accessibility. Vergin suggested that the little libraries could also house brochures for Dakota County and City services. The brochures could list emergency numbers and accessibility items for residents. Armon suggested having a treasure hunt in a few parks for kids and having an ice cream treat reward for the children. Abrahamson suggested car-charging stations at the parks. Vergin suggested adding cell phone charging stations at the parks as well.

b. Recognize the Marthaler Neighborhood Group

Donna Lindberg came before the Committee. She talked about her neighborhood group and the pollinator project coming up. They are still looking for volunteers for the event. It will be 9 am-noon this Saturday. She is also participating in No Mow May. Lindberg sets up cleanup groups twice a month for Marthaler Park in the summer. She has had good turnout especially with the buckthorn pulling. Lindberg monitors the blue bird boxes in both Garlough and Marthaler Parks. She sends out a notice for clean up to her neighbors. She says the park gets a lot of trash, especially in the area south of Wentworth Avenue and in the shelter area. She also participates in the Night to Unite. She has formed her own trail parade for Halloween trick-or-treaters in the past two years. Lynch commended Lindberg's group. He has participated with them in different events. The group's many volunteers, with the energy and the care they show for Marthaler Park, are spectacular.

c. Establishing New Subcommittees

Lynch talked about the Parks and Recreation subcommittees for the Art Park, the skate park, the summer celebration and the joint parks and environmental subcommittee. The City currently has an art park committee made up of private citizens; it needs committee members to join. Schletty said a subcommittee is also needed for park naming. Schletty said that the skate park subcommittee has to be reformed, as there may be state funding available soon for the new skatepark. Abrahamson said that he is interested in the skatepark subcommittee. Vergin said that she is interested in collaborating with the Environmental Committee. Lynch told Members to email Schletty if they are interested in any subcommittee.

Hagler asked if the City has ever done an art fair before. Schletty said that there was an art fair done on Smith Avenue called Art on the Avenue. It was run for two years about eight years ago. Hagler commented that the hockey rink in Harmon Park is busy even in summer with children playing street/roller hockey. Smock wondered if there were a need for an additional pickleball court. She does not see a lot of use in the Emerson pickleball court.

d. Consider Pickleball at Harmon Park

Lynch said that Mendota Heights had their grand opening of their newest pickle ball courts on a painted ice rink. There is an idea of doing this at Harmon Park on the cement-based hockey rink. Smock said the court in Emerson Park is right outside of her dining room window. She has a neighbor who still plays tennis in the court. The court is not constantly busy. Bellows said that one of the comments about the Emerson court is that the court is too tight and players do not like the surface of the courts. Smock commented that the situation would not change in the Harmon Park hockey rink. Lynch commented that the City does not want to create a "Pickleball Mecca." The West St. Paul courts will not be perfect destination facilities. They are great for people who live around here. For super pickleball players, Inver Grove Heights is where they should go. Smock repeated that she does not see the need. The City may need to get the word out more that the Emerson Park has the pickleball court. It may become busier during the summer. Hagler said the City might upset some people if the Harmon court is converted. There is a lot of use from teenagers playing street hockey; it is a good place to learn how to ride a bike.

4. Old Business

a. Sports Complex Blue Fence

Schletty showed some pictures of the fence at the Sports Complex. The fence has juniper bushes, dogwoods and other shrubs growing alongside it. The landscaping crew has some big plans for it; they want to remove some juniper bushes because they are getting out of control and replace them with shrubs (dogwoods and spirea.) The shrubs will grow into a full hedge. Schletty said the soccer association had no concerns with removal of the fence. Their children are 7-9 years old or older, and they do not generally run into the street. Schletty asked some parents of young children how they felt about the removal of the fence. The parents were not concerned because the children run toward the playground after they park their cars and not the street.

Vergin made a motion to move forward with the plan to remove the blue fence. Bellows suggested a friendly amendment to add improved landscaping. Vergin agreed to the amendment. Bellows seconded the motion. The motion carried. All Ayes.

Armon asked if the fence was going to be recycled. Schletty answered that the fence could be recycled or if someone wants to take the fence from the City, they can do that as well. There is some salvage value in the metal.

b. Explore West St. Paul Days Update

Schletty reported that Sam Murphy gave a good presentation to Council last night on the summer celebration planning. The event will be held August 11-13. On Thursday, August 11, 5-8pm, the Open House will kick off the event. Around 9 pm, fireworks will be launched at Harmon Park. On Friday, August 12, a parade is scheduled at 6 pm. It will start at Bernard Street and Charlton Avenue and then travel south to Minea Street. The Movie in the Dome will follow at about 8:00 pm. On Saturday, August 13, there will be an art, culture and environmental fair at Harmon Park. The Committee will be reviewing the submissions for the art sculpture contest. The winning sculpture would be displayed at Marthaler Park. The Committee will pick the top four submissions. The evening event would be the Concert in the Park at Harmon Park at 6pm-10 pm. There will be food trucks and a beer garden in the horseshoe shelter. The band PopRocks will be featured. There is also a community bike ride that is being planned for the morning. Schletty added the art sculpture contest is being modeled on the Art on Loan program. The celebration is being branded with a new website. (The site has not been fully built yet.) There are different sponsorship packages for the event.

c. 2022 Playground Replacement Discussion

Schletty reported that playgrounds are very expensive these days and very hard to get. The City is struggling with the new pricing on playgrounds. The price of steel has gone up dramatically. However, the natural playground may still happen at Kennedy Park.

5. Other

a. **Council Updates-** Berry reported there was no update but that Council still wants to hear all the ideas the Committee has.

b. Staff Updates

i. **New Recreation Staff-** The new Recreation Specialist started last week. Her name is Sam Gray. She is a 2020 graduate and previously worked for the community center in the City of Eagan.

- ii. **Summer Programs**-Many of the programs are full and have waiting lists.
- iii. **YMCA and the pool**-The City has renewed its contract with the YMCA to run the pool this summer. The City will open the pool the Saturday after school closes, June 11.
- iv. **Environmental Proclamation**-Schletty reported that Berry read a proclamation for Migratory Bird Day at last night's council meeting. There will be a small scale event this Saturday for the annual tree planting for Arbor Day. A fruit tree will be planted in Marthaler Park. The City will celebrate World Migratory Bird day as well this Saturday. The pollinator event at Garlough Park is also happening as well, 9 am- Noon.
- v. **River to River Trail**-There is an add-on project to the trail. There will be a bench node added to the trail in Garlough Park and in Marthaler Park. At the node, visitors can stop, sit and rest on the bench. A kiosk is being added to hole #1 at the disc golf course. It will be a large patio space/concrete pad and a kiosk/bulletin board sign installed in the space. There will be a couple of benches and bike racks and a bike repair station and some garbage cans. Lynch asked if the kiosk would affect play at the hole. Schletty responded no, the kiosk will be to the left side of the hole #1. Armon asked about having water fountains along the trail. Schletty said that along the trail it would not be possible. However, there will be a drinking fountain at the new trailhead in Marthaler Park.

c. Environmental Committee Liaison Updates

- i. **No Mow May**- Lynch said that 100 signs have been distributed for the event.
- ii. **Environmental Committee Initiatives**-the initiatives will be listed on the City website. It will be under "Our Community" and then "Residential Information."

6. Citizen Comments-NA

- 7. Adjournment**- The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon G. Hatfield