

**WEST ST. PAUL PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, January 11, 2022**

Parks & Rec. Members Present: Bonnie Bellows, Sara Blair, Jay DeLaRosby, Kelly Gibbons, Kelly Hager, David Lynch, Mike Petrasek
Non-voting Members Present: Wendy Berry, Council Liaison; Sharon Hatfield, Admin Specialist; Samantha Murphy, Parks and Recreation Coordinator

1. ROLL CALL

2. REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES

Chair Petrasek called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The minutes from the October 5, 2021 meeting were approved by the Committee.

3. NEW BUSINESS

a. Approve Committee Bylaws

Parks and Recreation Coordinator Murphy reported that in June 2018, City Council approved new Committee Bylaws, which included committee expectations, and last year this Committee was expanded from seven seats to nine seats. Four seats are up for appointment in March. The four current members are not seeking reappointment including the Chair and the Vice Chair.

After some discussion, by secret ballot, Members Lynch and Bellows were elected Chair and Vice-Chair respectively of the Committee.

A motion was made by Member DeLaRosby to accept the election results for Chair and Vice- Chair. Member Hager seconded the motion. The motion carried. All Ayes.

A motion by Lynch was made to approve the Bylaws. Bellows seconded the motion. The motion carried All Ayes.

b. Appointment of New Environmental Committee Liaison

DeLaRosby made a motion to nominate Lynch as liaison to the Environmental Committee. Hager seconded the motion. The motion carried. All Ayes.

c. Emerson Park Safety

Murphy related that in late 2021 some residents living near Emerson Park expressed concerns regarding the traffic and speeding along Gorman Avenue between Butler Avenue and Bernard Street. Many neighborhood kids use this park; there is concern with children crossing the street to get to the park. There is also concern that traffic will increase once the apartment building at Signal Hills is complete. Residents have requested a four-way stop sign at Arion Street. City staff investigated the intersection and presented the findings at the November 8 Council Meeting. Based on the findings, Council chose to follow staff recommendations and not install the four-way stop sign. Council recommended that the Committee discuss options for improved safety around the playground such as adding landscaping and fencing. Clpn. Berry explained that Kimley-Horn said a crosswalk at Arion Street would not make a difference because kids cross into the park from all directions.

After some discussion, a motion was made by Lynch that the Committee recommend a four-foot chain link fence along the south side and the west side of the play enclosure with a bench on the west side inside the fence. Member Gibbons seconded the motion. Discussion followed. Bellows asked how the children would get from inside the fence to the outside. Petrasek said the whole north side and the east side would be opened. It would “buy the parents some time.” Hager would like to see the cost difference between a rod fence and the chain link fence. Berry encouraged the Committee not to worry about the pricing. If the City waits, the process for bidding would further delay implementation this year. Lynch amended his motion to a fence-like structure and asked City staff to present cost options. The motion carried. 5 Ayes, 1 Nay (DeLaRosby)

d. Community Gardens

Murphy stated that Community Gardens is a topic that intersects with both the Environmental and Parks and Recreation Committee. Murphy asked the Committee to discuss their interest in Community Gardens in the parks. Options could include reserved plots, flower or food gardens or food forest. Lynch commented that this is not a new topic. Petrasek and Lynch were on the Committee years ago and the community garden location ideas brought forth by the Committee were met with a lot of resistance from the community. Lynch does not think there is room for a community garden in the city parks. He is not a supporter of the effort. Dodge Nature and Garlough School have community gardens. Private entities provide the service. It would be great if the City would provide an incentive to apartment complex developers to plan gardens to its residents. Petrasek remarked that the Community Garden is good concept in theory. The practicality is that nobody wants it in their back yard because the garden attracts rodents, rats to rabbits to whatever. Member Hagler asked about the food forest idea and possibly not having so much active participation. Lynch said the Environmental Committee discussed this. Fruit trees take a lot of maintenance. Murphy said that the Environmental Committee talked about planting native species like wild plums, grapes and Nanking cherries. Bellows asked if Schletty could identify possible locations available for the garden. If there are not, the City cannot have the garden. DeLaRosby asked if all of the former Thompson Oaks land has been sold off. Murphy said they are in development talks. Berry confirmed that the River-to-River Greenway would pass through the former Thompson Oaks. DeLaRosby said there was going to be a designated area between the Wentworth housing and the trail for the pollinator highway. It has potential for a garden. DeLaRosby also suggested killing two birds with one stone and planting raspberry bushes around Emerson Park. Hager said that she likes the idea of the Community Gardens but there has to be real interest in the community for it. Petrasek said, hopefully today's meeting has piqued the people's interest and they will contact the city. Lynch said the garden has to be a long-term commitment. The soils need to be conditioned a number of years. Member Blair suggested looking for grants for homeowners to install raised bed gardens in their front yards. Berry said that she liked the idea of incentivizing apartment developers to provide community gardens; it is something to talk about on the Council level.

e. New City Community Celebration

Petrasek said the New City Community Celebration is Murphy's "baby." Murphy said, "You're right." Murphy reported that for many years the celebration was held the third week in May. It was planned and run by a former nonprofit, Celebrate West St. Paul. It was sponsored by South Robert Street Business organization. At the direction of the Mayor and Council, City staff is now rebranding the city's celebration. The celebration will be on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday in August, (August 11-13.) The Open House would be on Thursday. On Friday, there will be an evening parade followed by the first Movie in the Sports Dome. On Saturday, there will be an all-day festival. The morning will feature a fitness component. In the afternoon, the city would have an arts and culture fair at Harmon Park with local vendors and artists. In the evening, the festivities would move to the Sports Complex with a food truck, a band (PopROCKS) and fireworks. There is the hope for a sport tournament all day. There may be a micro event like a horseshoe tournament sponsored by North40. Bellows said [the plan] was impressive. Berry gave a shout out to Murphy; Council played darts with their ideas and Murphy organized the ideas into a "really great weekend." Bellows asked about masking. Berry said Council did not discuss this. Murphy said that the City would continue planning and monitor the situation.

4. OLD BUSINESS

a. Continued 2022 Playground Replacement Discussion

Murphy stated that City is not in a good position timing-wise to get feedback from the Kennedy Park residents regarding the new playground replacement. The Assistant Parks and Recreation Director suggested replacing the playground at the pool and rolling funding for Kennedy Park into next year. Petrasek said the pool playground was the oldest playground. It is not ADA compliant and missing a few equipment pieces. It was suggested by city staff for replacement. Berry advised the Committee to "go wild," with their wishes for the playground. The playground could have a zip line or one piece of the park could be natural and the rest a traditional playground. Lynch said there is a lot of space in the area including the flat area amongst the oak trees. Murphy said the footprint restrictions might be the result of wanting to install the volleyball court and staying within budget. DeLaRosby said that the Committee was charged to refreshen the playground but stay within budget costs. Bellows said there were three directives for this playground: replace the playground, install a new sand

volleyball court, and implement a separate name and sign for the park area. Murphy said a watcher commented that a larger footprint for the playground is possible, but it would increase the budget. Committee members mentioned ninja playgrounds, skate parks and wave parks as well. Petrasek said he was hearing, “climbing walls and rope [features]. He would like to see some options in February that would get away from the traditional playground that would fit or expand the footprint. DeLaRosby said that the pool is a “summer draw.” He suggested finding a way to make the park a winter destination as well. The city could also lean into the summer theme, and have a big umbrella type structure or permanent lounge area. Lynch said a grassy area at the pool is also another option. Petrasek said the Committee needed to make the decisions in February. The City needs to bid the projects as soon as possible.

b. Art Park Subcommittee Update- NA

c. Skate Park Update-NA

5. OTHER

- a. **Council Updates-** Berry said there is nothing new that the Committee has not already discussed.
- b. **Staff Updates-** Murphy said the Spring/Summer Catalog is being designed now. The Catalog will hit homes in February. There are new exciting features: Youth and Adult Pickleball clinics, tech programming camps and dancing at Nancy Raddatz. Murphy is already getting requests for spring and summer registration. Registration for spring opens in early February. March 1 is when Summer Registration starts. The City will be bringing another full time staff for recreation. Murphy’s role has changed and the City is offering many more activities now with many more children on waiting lists. The goal is to expand programming.
- c. **Petrasek- Year Review**
 - i. **Sam Murphy Acknowledgement-** Petrasek publicly thanked Murphy for the Halloween Extravaganza. The event was top notch.
 - ii. **Park Inventory-** The Committee has prioritized the equipment that needs to be replaced and the timing of the replacement.
 - iii. **Skate park Subcommittee-** This subcommittee was started. Petrasek asked Committee Members not to let it die.
 - iv. **Pickleball Courts and the Egg Hunt**
 - v. **Marthaler Park Master Plan-**Petrasek is most proud of this effort.
 - vi. **Horseshoe Facility-**The Committee has discussed reconfiguring the facility. The facility still needs to be discussed, as it is not being used to its full potential.
 - vii. **Art Park**

6. ADJOURN

The committee members adjourned at 7:01 pm. The next Parks and Recreation Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 8, 2022 at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon G. Hatfield