

**WEST ST. PAUL PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**6:00 PM, Tuesday, September 12, 2023**  
**West St. Paul Council Chambers**

**Park & Rec. Members Present:** Chair Dave Lynch, Luke Abrahamson, Bonnie Bellows, Sara Blair, John Cronin, Kelly Hagler, Teresa Smock, Emily Vergin, Nadine Wenzel

**Non-Voting Members Present:** Councilmember Wendy Berry; Assistant Parks Director Dave Schletty; Parks, Recreation, & Environment Director Eric Weiss

Chair Lynch called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**1. Roll Call**

**2. Citizen Comments**

- a. An anonymous resident spoke regarding a petition that has been generated for increased water aerobics and lap swim time at the West St. Paul Pool.

**3. Adopt Minutes**

The August 8, 2023 minutes were approved by the committee.

**4. New Business**

**a. Review of 2023 Pool Season**

Parks Director Weiss gave a presentation on the history and review of current activities of the West St. Paul Pool. The city has an agreement with the YMCA of the North, dating back to 2010, for management and staffing of the pool. This year, pass sales increased by 7 percent. Concession sales also increased by 27 percent.

The YMCA has implemented a new staffing structure with an emphasis on supervisors. Staffing levels have somewhat normalized back to pre-COVID era operations. The YMCA offers two programs that are not part of its agreement with the city: Water X (aerobics) and lap swim. Changes to the climate, like extreme heat, are affecting staffing and other considerations like access to shade and drinking water. There are also increased expenses with the operation of the facility.

The pool is an older facility that will need renovation, improvement, or replacement in the future. The city will make the investments in health and safety that are necessary but will delay major expenses until a plan for the future of the facility is finalized.

Katie Lowe, Executive Director of the YMCA, was present to answer the committee's questions. The city and YMCA agreement helps to properly staff the facility while stabilizing budgets. With the sometimes difficult nature of staffing a pool, the YMCA offers a bench of lifeguards from other facilities that can be tapped when local staffing is low, a benefit that the city would not have access to without a partnership. The YMCA iterated its support for the pool and openness to exploring new approaches, operations, and procedures

Chair Lynch asked about the pool staffing needs. Executive Director Lowe said it is dependent on the activity. If School District 197 has activities, a few more lifeguards are needed. If both pools are open and the slide is being used, there is a three-lifeguard minimum plus front desk staff. Depending on how warm it is, lifeguards rotate every fifteen minutes. They send staff home if it makes sense. The YMCA works on a tight margin. Member Wrenzel suggested more advertising for the pool before the city considers a community center or any other plans. She also

suggested a study of the price of the pool passes and concessions items. Member Hagler suggested having holiday gift cards for the pool. Member Vergin suggested sending end-of-season surveys to pass holders to see what improvements could be made. Member Wrenzel suggested partnering with local businesses to sell pool passes. Chair Lynch suggested a city activity pass with the Sports Dome and the pool.

**b. Athletic Facilities Rental Policy**

Parks Director Weiss introduced a revision of the athletic facilities rental policy previously considered by the committee.

A major proposed change in the process is the prioritization system. It emphasizes government and West St. Paul residents and groups. City staff has established a system and a schedule in which there are deadlines for the rental applications. After the priority deadlines are met, applications will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. There is also more organization and clarity to the policy which addresses issues like maintenance and cleaning up.

The strategy for implementation includes updating the city website, handouts, facility maps, facility fact sheets, and checkout lists.

Member Hagler asked if the concession stand was included in the field rental at Harmon Park. Parks Director Weiss responded that the policy does cover concessions rentals and once the policy is adopted, staff would review concessions operations with youth athletic partners. Member Wenzel asked about the field usage rental percentage. Assistant Parks Director Schletty said that usage is high, with major facilities rented 60-80 percent of the time. The city does not have a problem filling the spaces; city staff wants to be able to manage it better. The city also wants the rental process to be equitable and fair to everyone.

**5. Old Business**

**a. Park System Plan**

Parks Director Weiss said the plan is still advancing. Progress on the plan has slowed due to the consultant's schedule. Staff have asked to shift some priorities to focus on implementation and getting some goals, strategies, and tactics laid out. Parks Director Weiss would like the plan to move forward by the end of the year. Once 80 percent of the draft is finished, Weiss would like to do some community engagement before presenting the plan to the Council.

**b. Park Naming**

Parks Director Weiss said that the Park Naming project would be folded into the Parks Systems Plan. Assistant Parks Director Schletty added that the park naming is part of the signage plans for the parks.

**6. Other**

**a. Staff Updates**

**i. Pollinator Project, City Hall**

Parks Director Weiss related that Council approved a pollinator project at City Hall. The city will be partnering with Great Water Greening to plant pollinator-friendly plants around the civic campus.

**ii. Grant Opportunities for Trees**

The city is applying for two grant opportunities with the State of Minnesota; together they could potentially provide \$1M for trees. Both grants will help in the management of Emerald Ash Borer. The first grant would provide funding for public tree removal and replacement. The

second grant (ReLeaf Program) has more flexibility. The grant would be used to update the city tree inventory, develop a strategy action plan for trees, and private tree removal and replacement, targeted to low-income communities.

**iii. Marthaler Park Update**

Assistant Parks Director Schletty reported that there have been delays with the permitting process, weather, and bad soil issues. Despite delays, significant progress has been made and additional progress will be made in October.

**iv. Recycling/Park Recreation Events**

Parks Director Weiss shared information on several community events including a “Shred it” event on September 16 at Wakota Credit Union; a cleanup day on September 23; Oktoberfest Beer Tasting at Food Smith on September 27; And the Maker’s Market on September 30.

**b. Council Update**

Councilmember Berry reminded everyone about the cleanup event at the Harmon Park ice rink on Saturday, September 16.

**c. Commissioner’s Park Updates**

Member Bellows complimented the staff on flowers on the medians on Robert Street. Chair Lynch inquired about the tree damage in Garlough Park. Assistant Parks Director Schletty said the damage repair will be a fall-winter project. Chair Lynch asked for more wood chips to be put down. Schletty said that there will also be a buckthorn treatment being done soon in the parks; signs will be posted. Chair Lynch asked if the disc golf course redesign could be moved up in the priority list.

**d. Environmental Committee Liaison**

Member Vergin reported that the Environmental Committee did not meet this month.

**7. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Sharon G. Hatfield**  
**Administrative Specialist**