



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes March 10, 2021

Webex



I. Call Meeting to Order

President Crosby called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: Amanda Crosby, David Demmer, Tjaard Breeuwer, Britt Rohrbaugh, Jenny Peterson, Barb Darland, Natalie Chin, Noah Kramer, Jill Joyce, City Council Liaison – Arik Forsman, St. Louis County Commissioner – Ashley Grimm, Jill Lofald - ISD 709 School Board Liaison

III. Approval of January 13 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Demmer motioned for approval of the January 13 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Joyce. Unanimously approved.

IV. Presentations

A. Meet Parks Project Coordinator, Todd Armbruster

B. Parks Fund Overview (Informational) Jess Peterson, Manager and Jim Filby Williams, Director of Parks, Properties, and Libraries

Demmer questioned what the process would entail to change the referendum levy to adjust for inflation. Jess Peterson shared the Master Plan was the foundation, proper engagement with the community will need to take place to find out what is desired and how much the public is willing to support. Jim Filby Williams shared that messaging of the latest referendum was misinterpreted by having it fully support the Parks Fund, when in fact, it is only 50%. Demmer highlighted the importance of engaging the public for the upcoming Master Plan process.

Chin questioned what efforts will take place to provide inclusion in the community. Jess Peterson shared the City is currently building the steering committee along with creating an RFP to hire a consultant to perform an inclusive community engagement process.

Joyce questioned if there is an accurate inventory of the parks system including maintenance for the next ten years. Jess Peterson shared we are working on building our asset inventory during the last couple of years as well as noting their condition.

Public Comment

Jim Sandness questioned if there will be any aid from the American Relief Act to be signed by President Biden.

Breeuwer questioned if trails are included in the asset inventory list. Jess Peterson indicated she would need to further review the inventory and will circle back.

V. Commissioner Committees

Administrative (E-Board) meeting date: Thursday, April 1 at noon via Webex
Amanda Crosby, Tjaard Breeuwer [Jess Peterson, Alicia Watts, Jessica Haig, Jim Filby Williams]

Public Golf Committee – Monday, April 26 at 5 p.m., virtual meeting on Webex



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David Demmer, Jenny Peterson, Noah Kramer [Jess Peterson, Jessica Haig, Jim Filby Williams]

VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

A. Public Golf Committee Report (Informational) Commissioner Demmer, Chair of Committee

Shared the last meeting included a marketing overview provided by Bill Colgan, committee members had the opportunity to pose ideas. Shared Lester will be minimally maintained during 2021 and will reopen while Enger is undergoing renovations, then permanently close. Stated there wasn't consensus to this decision within the committee. Stated it is a tough reality and everyone in Duluth deserves public golf – which is the priority. Indicated there is a lot of work to be done and the Committee will next review capital improvements at Enger.

VII. New Business

VIII. Old Business

A. Next Steps for Duluth Public Golf (Informational) Jim Filby Williams, Director of Parks, Properties, and Libraries

Filby Williams reflected on the announcement from the last Public Golf Committee meeting. Stated the Committee will develop a plan for the renovations at Enger that can be financed entirely from golf revenue, the management firm, real estate sales, and potential public contributions. Stated we would need to find an affordable irrigation upgrade and an increased MN DNR water allocation that was previously significantly reduced. Shared an RFP will be posted to find golf management firm after the current contract ends.

Jenny Peterson questioned why there isn't a hearing to close a large park asset. Filby Williams stated that the City is not closing the land to public use, but rather ceasing an operation of a golf program, which City Administration has authority. Stated anyone is free to reach out to City Council with public comments. Jenny Peterson shared concern of the lack of engagement from the community within the Committee. Mentioned there is not a good relationship between the City and public golfers and concerns with the current 2021 Public Golf Committee. Filby Williams shared appreciation for Peterson's comments –stated the decision to right size the golf program was based on the amount of golfers. Indicated taxpayers subsidize the annual losses, and a survey was distributed to golfers which indicated only a small amount of people who are willing to have raised rates. Highlighted that there is opportunity to hold special meetings. Jenny Peterson questioned how the property will be used. Jess Peterson shared staff are working on a set of policy announcements which will include allowable use of the Lester public golf course that is safe, allowable, and soft use in order to allow for play in 2023. Councilor Forsman shared he was part of the Public Golf Committee and has spent two years having conversations with Filby Williams to see what could be done for Lester. Shared that Director Filby Williams didn't leave anything unturned. Shared he has brought forward the idea of having Lester open for one more year, which was heard from members of the public, and shared Administration does listen to the community. Indicated they looked at a private option, and City Council did not approve, that's when he knew Lester did not have a future for golf. Shared there are much more priorities, such as fire, where dollars are needed. Shared this decision did not require Council approval, but has openly shared he agrees with Administration's decision.

Breeuwer shared an appreciation when City Councilors and County Commissioners share information during Parks and Recreation Commission meetings.

Public Comment

Bob Heller spoke on behalf of golf, reflected on the letter he wrote to the editor.



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Jim Sandness stated he is a current member on the Public Golf Committee. Questioned what the next steps will be for Committee members. Filby Williams indicated he can provide this information.

Wayne Lunde spoke on behalf of golf, shared optimism that Enger will succeed.

Tim Allen spoke on behalf of golf and questioned how volunteers could be utilized.

B. Waabizheshikana Heritage Interpretation Plan (Action Requested) Cliff Knettel, Senior Planner

A presentation of the Final Draft of the Interpretive Plan was shared with the Commission.

Demmer shared support for the plan as well as the story poles. Shared excitement to hear there are multiple funding sources to support this project, requested clarification on the phases. Questioned if there will be unique maintenance costs with the story poles. Geer stated durability is in mind when designing – shared there is potential for vandalism, stated panels can be easily cleaned and have a warranty. Jess Peterson stated this project will be a phased approach, as Waabizheshikana is built – elements will be incorporated.

Chin questioned if ADA accessibility was included when designing the signs. Geer stated adjustments were made to meet ADA guidelines.

Public Comment

Mike Casey questioned if the steel industry was included on the plan. Knettel stated this is included within the plan.

Crosby motioned to approve the Waabizheshikana Interpretation Plan. Second by Demmer. Motion Carries.

IX. Division Report

Jenny Peterson requested an agenda item on how community clubs can utilize community centers.

X. Public Comment

Mike spoke on behalf of the Cross City Trail and the future housing project at Enger.

Jim Sandness indicated he will email Jim Filby Williams his questions. Shared reasoning for serving on the Public Golf Committee.

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:32 pm.

XII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 14 via Webex.