



# PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

## Meeting Minutes May 8, 2024

### Harrison Community Center



#### I. Call Meeting to Order

President Demmer called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

#### II. Roll Call

Present: David Demmer, Kala Pedersen, Beth Olson, Josie Laporte, Terrance Lovajoy, Dave Cizmas, Azrin Awal – City Council Liaison

Not Present: Hailey Sigafus, Sarah Beehler, Ashley Grimm – St. Louis County Commissioner, Stephanie Williams – School Board Liaison

#### III. Approval of the April 10 Meeting Minutes

**Commissioner Cizmas motioned to approve the April 10 meeting minutes. Commissioner LaPorte second. Unanimously approved. Motion carries.**

#### IV. Presentations

A. Arrowhead Youth Soccer Association (Informational) Julien Bratek

Olson questioned how people find out about the program. Bratek stated that AYSA uses social media to get the word out. Stated that the majority of information is spread via word of mouth.

Lovejoy questioned how they get the community involved in volunteering for the program. Bratek stated that there are a number of soccer clubs spread throughout the City. Stated that each club recruits volunteers for their teams. Stated that AYSA offers free soccer coaching clinics for the volunteer coaches.

Lovejoy questioned how far north the program goes. Bratek stated that Two Harbors has a club, which schedules games with teams as far as Silver Bay. Stated that they also are involved in Superior, WI.

LaPorte questioned what are their long-term goals or hopes for the program. Bratek stated that they have seen lots of growth in the youngest age bracket group. Stated that they would like to see improvements to their soccer fields. Stated that they are focusing on goals in the Duluth community, with specific goals that are separate from the broader goals of the state. Stated that their biggest focus is recreational.

LaPorte questioned if there are scholarships or fee assistance programs. Bratek stated that their camps offer financial assistance. Stated that they provide assistance to the neighborhood clubs as well.

Pedersen questioned if they have sponsorships or if they fundraise. Bratek stated that they have a limited number of sponsorships. Stated that their primary revenue source is registrations. Stated that they are looking into more ways to raise funds.

Awal questioned if they have considered connecting with international students to be a part of the program. Bratek stated that they have attended career fairs to recruit coaches. Stated that transportation for students is a challenge, as the facilities are not near the colleges.

Demmer questioned if they have enough facilities for games. Bratek stated that some neighborhoods are tighter on space than others. Stated that they do not want to overuse the fields.

Demmer questioned if they have enough facilities for practices. Bratek stated that many teams will rent field space at a school. Stated that this also varies by neighborhood.



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Demmer questioned if the association has ever embarked on a strategic planning process. Bratek stated that they have not done an official planning process, but do clarify future goals as a board and staff.

#### B. Hartley Pond and Dam Feasibility Study (For Future Action) Cole Webster, GEI Consultants

Director Filby Williams expressed gratitude to the Minnesota DNR and the GEI consultant team for their partnership on this long effort. Stated that the request from the City was to conduct a feasibility study of options to improve ecological health of Tischer Creek via changes to the Hartley Pond and Dam, in a manner that would not increase downstream flooding, preserve all existing recreational experiences in the park, and is paid for and staffed entirely by DNR. Stated that the City has not committed to moving forward with any course of action. Stated that the City will bring the City's recommendation a week in advance of the Commission taking action on this item, potentially at the June meeting. Stated that the City is taking extraordinary care to not inadvertently cause increased downstream flood hazards.

Pedersen questioned if any of the proposed alternatives allows for the pond to be used recreationally. Consultants stated that in alternative 4a, the pond would be smaller, but would be able to be used recreationally. Stated that the current pond is 15 acres, the proposed pond is 3 acres. Director Filby Williams stated that the pond is losing recreational value due to sediment accumulation. Consultants stated that the deepest part of the pond is where the proposed smaller pond would be located.

Cizmas questioned if they estimated how long until the dam loses its ability to mitigate flooding, and what is the lifespan of the current dam. Consultants stated that it is difficult to predict the timeline of a pond. Stated that the sediment is moving downstream and is accumulating. Stated that this accelerates over time. Stated that the dam being high-hazard does not mean it is failing- however it means that if it does fail, there would be significant consequences. Stated that the dam was restored in 1985 and is in fair to good condition. Stated that the flood mitigation is not at risk due to sediment accumulation.

Lovejoy questioned if there are other waterways besides Tischer Creek that directly impact the pond in Hartley. Consultants stated that the DNR also completed a project on the entire Tischer watershed, Roadmap to Resilience. Stated that there are related projects in Rice Lake and Forest Hill Cemetery.

Lovejoy questioned if there has been any discussion on beaver dams. Consultants stated that beavers propose a lot of challenges to fisheries. Stated that this will be a discussion during the planning process.

Olson questioned if there are considerations for invasive species in Hartley Park. Kubiak stated that there will need to be a buckthorn management plan to be immediately implemented. Stated that the current master plans for Hartley would need to be amended.

Olson questioned if there has been a risk analysis involved in this project. Director Filby Williams stated that the central condition for the City in making the decision will be some version of a third party risk analysis.

Olson questioned what a user could expect in terms of limited use during this project. Kubiak stated that the design process could last through 2027, followed by another decision point. Stated that the construction process would begin after that. Director Filby Williams stated that the City would request revegetation as a part of this project if the City decides to proceed with any of these alternatives. Stated that a progressive invasive species and revegetation plan is moving forward for the entire park.

Olson questioned if there will be any impact on existing trails. Kubiak stated that there would be impacts and reroutes to current trails. Director Filby Williams stated that the current master plan contains proposed



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additional trail connections which could be a part of this project. Consultants stated that the construction plans would contain detailed trails and access information.

Awal questioned if the project would focus specifically on the pond, or if it would extend the length of Tischer Creek. Consultants stated that the project would be focused on the Hartley Pond and Dam.

Awal questioned where the water would go if the pond was to be made smaller. Consultants stated that there would be a pumping or siphoning plan, which would be designed to not affect the downstream flow. Stated that there is a pipe currently at the bottom of the pond, which may not be operable.

Demmer questioned how much alteration has happened to the natural valley in the watershed. Consultants stated that the Roadmap to Resilience addresses this. Stated that sections of the watershed are largely undeveloped. Stated that the warm water coming out of Hartley Pond affects conditions downstream.

Demmer questioned if the design would take elevation into consideration. Consultants stated that the design will be the size and shape of the culvert opening, rather than elevation.

Demmer questioned if the flood mitigation factor was more heavily weighted in the scoring. Consultants stated that their scores are not weighted, intentionally to make sure the results were not skewed. Director Filby Williams stated that the City has its own weighting system for scoring the proposed alternatives, and flood mitigation will be weighted much heavier than other factors.

Awal questioned how public input is being collected. Kubiak stated that there is an online survey, posted on the City website. Stated there will be a formal public meeting on May 23. Peterson stated that the link to the survey will be sent with the press release.

LaPorte questioned how the various alternatives would impact brook trout. Consultants stated that taking no action would continue the current issues. Stated that alternative 4a would get rid of the migration barrier and temperature issues.

LaPorte questioned if the trout waterway means that it is a protected stream. Consultants stated that the DNR has regulations on designated trout streams.

#### **V. Commissioner Committees**

Administrative (E-Board) meeting date: Thursday, June 6 at noon, Conference Room G22  
David Demmer, Kala Pedersen, Josie LaPorte [Jessica Peterson, Bridget Erickson]

#### **VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports**

Cizmas reported on the Clean Yer Creek event, as well as a trail clean-up event. Stated that it was a huge success.

#### **VII. New Business**

#### **VIII. Old Business**

#### **IX. Division Report**

Peterson updated on the Munger Landing item in the division report.



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**X. Public Comment**

Julie O'Leary spoke on the Hartley Dam Feasibility Study.

**XI. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

**XII. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be Wednesday, June 12 at 5:00 p.m., Council Chambers.