



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes January 15, 2025

Duluth City Hall, Council Chambers



I. Call Meeting to Order

President Demmer called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: David Demmer, Kala Pedersen, Beth Olson, Sarah Beehler, Terrance Lovejoy

Not Present: Josie Laporte, Brooke Marinar, Hailey Sigafus, Dave Cizmas, Tara Swenson – City Council Liaison, Ashley Grimm – St. Louis County Commissioner

III. Approval of the December 11 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Beehler motioned to approve the December 11 meeting minutes. Commissioner Olson second. Unanimously approved. Motion carries.

IV. Presentations

A. Duluth Huskies (Informational) Mike Rosenzweig and Herb Gibson

Olson questioned what their marketing looks like for advertising games. Gibson stated that KFAN and local TV stations will be talking about and broadcasting the Huskies games, and they have printed schedules available. Rosenzweig stated that the other events connected with game nights may bring more attention to Wade Stadium and the possibilities there.

Demmer questioned what the biggest deferred maintenance needs are at Wade Stadium. Gibson stated that the field itself is in good shape. Stated that the biggest needs are concessions, bathrooms, and seating.

Demmer questioned if they have ever done an economic impact analysis. Rosenzweig stated that they had a plan to do so, but the pandemic postponed it. Stated that the economic impact is likely greater than people realize.

B. Athletic Venues Reinvestment Initiative (Informational) RDG Planning and Design

Pedersen questioned if hockey and basketball groups were included in the questionnaire. Blome stated that they were.

Lovejoy questioned if Fryberger is a location for gymnastics. Peterson stated that the gymnastics program is run by the Duluth Y and takes place in the Woodland Community Center, which is a different building on the same site.

Olson questioned what consideration there has been for the future of sports in Duluth. Blome stated that they have been tracking trends. Stated that one of the main recommendations will be multi-use, flexible spaces that can adjust as needs change.

Beehler questioned if people and groups from outside of Duluth were consulted on how they are represented in Duluth athletics spaces. Dowling stated that they spoke with Visit Duluth on regional programs and tourism. Stated that these discussions have been preliminary and will continue.

Beehler questioned what the plan is for upcoming engagement. Blome stated that there will be a set of open houses, similar to the previous public engagement sessions in August. Stated that high level concept



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options will be shown at these sessions.

Demmer questioned what the reaction is to the lack of willingness to pay a rental fee for facilities. Dowling stated that this will be an important consideration for operational viability. Stated that the tourism lens could help offset some of this perspective.

Demmer questioned if the facilities assessed included Enger Park Golf Course and Clubhouse. Peterson stated that there is already a plan in place for Enger Golf Course renovations.

Demmer questioned where the gap is in basketball participants and interest in new facilities. Dowling stated that basketball organizations have been relying on school facilities, which may skew the data. Stated that they need to have conversations with the school district. Stated that there is a reluctance to ask for a new facility in order for their program to remain cost effective.

V. Commissioner Committees

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

VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Demmer and Pedersen spoke on making a request of the City for more information and analysis on capital budget and infrastructure needs throughout the Duluth park system to better understand the true cost of maintaining and improving the system.

Olson questioned if an analysis of this sort has been done in the past and how long ago. Peterson stated that there is a good amount of baseline analysis in the Essential Spaces plan from 2022. Stated that there are opportunities to zoom in on more specific concerns related to the status of the budget availability to support the park system.

Demmer noted that having data regarding the budget numbers to support the parks would help with future conversations with City leaders and the public.

Lovejoy questioned if there could be more discussion on this topic at an E-Board meeting. Peterson stated that this could be a topic that could be discussed at E-Board as well as an agenda topic at an upcoming Commission meeting. Peterson noted that a number of Commissioners were absent from the meeting and acknowledged their participation in this topic may be beneficial as well.

Olson questioned what a timeline would look like for submitting a request and receiving the information. Peterson stated that it depends on what the ask is of City staff. Stated that the City budget process typically starts in the summer for the upcoming year, so would aim to bring information of this nature to the Commission in spring.

Olson motioned to request the City to do an analysis of the Parks and Recreation annual capital and maintenance allocation for existing infrastructure. Lovejoy second.

Beehler questioned what the timeframe is for which years to include in the analysis. Peterson stated that a likely approach is to provide data from this point in time, use of historical data, and what is needed in the future. Peterson noted considerations such as what are acceptable standards for usable conditions of park spaces and investment strategies must be considered alongside select consolidation efforts over time. More money is not the only solution to doing a better job of taking care of the park system.



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Unanimously approved. Motion carries.

VII. New Business

VIII. Old Business

A. E-Board 2025 Election (Action Requested)

Olson motioned to nominate Demmer as President, Pedersen as Vice President, and Laporte as Secretary. Beehler second. Unanimously approved. Motion carries.

IX. Division Report

Manager Peterson highlighted the Tommy Johnson award received by Duluth Parks and Recreation for Youth on Trails.

X. Public Comment

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:21 pm.

XII. Next Meeting

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