



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes March 12, 2025

Duluth City Hall, Conference Room 330



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, Brooke Marinan, Dave Cizmas, Tara Swenson – City Council Liaison, Stephanie Williams – School Board Liaison

Not Present: Sarah Beehler, Terrance Lovejoy, Hailey Sigafus, Ashley Grimm – St. Louis County Commissioner

III. Approval of the January 15 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Pedersen motioned to approve the January 15 meeting minutes. Commissioner Olson second. Unanimously approved. Motion carries.

IV. Presentations

A. Duluth Ultimate Community (Informational) Ben Nicklay

LaPorte questioned if they have considered the Grant Park field. Nicklay stated that they have occasionally utilized that space. Peterson stated that the field is school district property.

Demmer questioned who determines the use of the Arlington fields. Peterson stated that the fields at Arlington and Jean Duluth are under a contract with AYSA, which gives them control and discretion over the scheduling and use of those fields. Stated that the City has been evaluating the contract and having conversations with AYSA on potential changes to future contracts.

Demmer questioned how long the contract with AYSA is in place. Peterson stated that contracts are typically 3 years. Stated that this contract has been renewed many times. Stated that this contract is central to AYSA's operations.

Demmer questioned if DUC charges registration fees. Nicklay stated that they do charge fees for leagues, and they are typically split between DUC and the City.

Demmer questioned if there are other fundraising opportunities. Nicklay stated that there are other potential opportunities to raise funds.

Olson questioned how folks can find more information. Nicklay stated that there is information about leagues on the Parks website and in Parks program brochures, and registration is through the Parks website as well. Stated that Facebook is a main way they communicate with members.

Williams questioned what they need to build the youth program. Nicklay stated that they need someone to coordinate and organize it, as DUC is stretched thin already running their current program. Stated that a sponsor or partner organization would go a long way in helping. Stated that they have done a few youth-focused events over the years. Stated that Minnesota Ultimate is a statewide nonprofit that would have resources to help.

Marinan questioned how many players are on a team on average. Nicklay stated that 7 players are on a field at a time. Stated that teams typically have 20-25 players.

Olson questioned if a spectator could go watch a game. Nicklay stated that their spring league is coming



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up at the Heritage Center in April-May.

B. Parks Permitting Recap (Informational) Chris Severson, Parks Permit Coordinator

LaPorte questioned if the permits issued impacts maintenance prioritization decisions. Severson stated that if a maintenance project is anticipated, spaces are closed to rentals. Peterson stated that the community center improvements are made possible by revenues reinvested in the spaces. Stated that a structure failing is a decision point of whether it will be replaced or simply removed. Stated that prioritization is not a one size fits all process.

LaPorte questioned how safety is a factor in maintenance decisions. Peterson stated that safety is typically the first reason that an issue is addressed.

Pedersen questioned what happens to the old tables and chairs when they are replaced. Severson stated that some are not reusable due to poor condition and some are shuffled to other community centers or community organizations.

Cizmas questioned how Parks deal with enforcement of permits in the park system. Severson stated that the Parks department does not have enforcement capacity. Stated that education is a main way to mitigate improper use of park spaces. Stated that the police department is informed about events in park spaces.

Demmer questioned what percent of revenues go back into facilities. Peterson stated that all revenues that come in through the permitting system go to the operating budget for reinvestment in our park system. Stated that no permit or program revenues go to the general fund.

Demmer questioned if there is growth potential for revenues. Severson stated that community centers have opportunities for growth in the future. Stated that trail events bring in additional revenues per participant on top of standard event fees.

C. Norton Park Improvements (Informational) Allison Brooks, Project Coordinator

Demmer questioned what the community conversation was regarding accessibility in the park. Brooks stated that there will be switchbacks and accessible connections to access the different terraces of the park. Stated that accessibility is a large factor of the upcoming grant opportunity.

D. Parks Capital Budget Update (Informational) Jessica Peterson and Erik Birkeland

Councilor Swenson questioned when the Park levy **will** be brought back to citizens. Peterson stated that there is no sunset, so it will remain the amount it is currently until something else replaces it.

Marinan questioned why the City budgets are set by dollar amount instead of by percentages. Peterson stated that the budget office would have more information. Stated that the budget process for the upcoming year starts in June and starts with a fixed amount given to the Parks department. Stated that after the operating budget is set, whatever is left over in the initial amount goes to Capital. Stated that there is always the option for City Administration and City Council to allocate more money to the Park system. Stated there is no restriction on the City for general fund allocations to the Park Fund.

Olson questioned how much of the initial Parks budget allocation gets allocated to capital. Peterson stated that the amount to capital shrinks every year, as operating costs increase. Stated that as a result the



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ability to leverage outside funds becomes much more challenging.

LaPorte questioned how the City Council Liaison can advocate with City Council, and how Commissioners can advocate on this topic. Councilor Swenson stated that there may be a lack of understanding of the magnitude of the problem. Stated that sharing information and planting seeds with Councilors is a place to start.

V. Commissioner Committees

Administrative (E-Board) meeting date: Thursday, April 3 at noon, Parks Conference Room - David Demmer, Kala Pedersen, Josie LaPorte [Jessica Peterson, Bridget Erickson]

VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Demmer reported on the Lester Park Working Group and that it will hold a meeting to finalize options for the golf course property. Stated that it is not been clear when or how the Parks and Recreation Commission will receive that information from the working group.

VII. New Business

VIII. Old Business

IX. Division Report

X. Public Comment

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:54 pm.

XII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 9 at 5:00 p.m., Council Chambers.