

**CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS, DAKOTA COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

**PARKS AND RECREATION MEETING MINUTES**

APRIL 11, 2023

The April meeting of the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, April 11, 2023, at Mendota Heights City Hall, 1101 Victoria Curve.

**1. Call to Order** – Chair Jaffrey Blanks called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2. Roll Call** – The following Commissioners were present: Chair Jaffrey Blanks, Commissioners: Stephanie Meyer, Michelle Muller, Jo Schifsky, Dan Sherer, and Michael Toth; absent: Commissioner Tica Hanson. Student Representative: Meg Murphy. Staff present: Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence, Recreation Program Coordinator Willow Eisfeldt, and Public Works Director Ryan Ruzek.

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**4. Approval of Agenda**

*Motion Muller/second Meyer to approve the agenda*

AYES 6: NAYS 0

**5.a Approval of Minutes from March 14, 2023 Regular Meeting**

*Motion Muller/second Schifsky to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting.*

AYES 6: NAYS 0

**5.b Approval of Minutes from March 22, 2023 Joint Work Session Meeting**

*Motion Muller/second Schifsky to approve the minutes of the March 22, 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission Joint Work Session Meeting.*

AYES 6: NAYS 0

**6. Citizen Comment Period (for items not on the agenda)**

None.

**7. Introduction of Recreation Program Coordinator**

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence introduced Willow Eisfeldt, the new Recreation Program Coordinator who began employment on March 13<sup>th</sup>. She reviewed the tasks that would be handled by the position and provided additional details on the experience the employee brings with her. She noted that it has been quite amazing as to the things that have been accomplished in her first month.

**7. Acknowledgement of Reports**

Chair Blanks read the titles of the three updates (Par 3, Recreation, and Park Improvement Updates) and polled the Commissioners for questions.

**7.a Par 3 Update**

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence reported that today was the first day open for the course. She expressed thanks to the staff that worked to prepare the course over the weekend. She stated that the course has already been busy with about 40 high school students out today. She reviewed the updates that were completed in the clubhouse as well as the

projects still planned. She noted that the new patio furniture is also in place. She stated that they are still awaiting delivery of two pieces of equipment and are working to find loaner equipment until those pieces can be delivered.

### **7.b Recreation Update**

Recreation Program Coordinator Willow Eisfeldt highlighted upcoming programming opportunities, activities, and events. She also noted the seasonal positions they are still looking to hire for the upcoming season.

Student Representative Murphy asked the age at which students can work.

Ms. Eisfeldt replied that those 16 years and older can apply for some of the seasonal positions.

### **7.c Parks Improvement Update**

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence provided an update on the progress of park improvement projects as well as the anticipated timelines for approved projects. She also reviewed the current balance of the special parks fund.

Commissioner Toth referenced the new dugouts and asked if that was a working relationship with MHAA or whether that was a City expense.

Ms. Lawrence stated that the City will be fully funding the project but worked in coordination with the organization.

Commissioner Sherer stated that there has been a goal over the past few years to add dugout covers. He referenced the Council discussion related to the canopy addition for the playground which would put the project over budget. He recognized that some other projects have come in under budget. He asked if there is tracking of whether projects are over or under budgets which could help guide additional considerations.

Ms. Lawrence noted that Civic Center includes fencing and therefore it is not yet known as to whether it would be over or under budget. She stated that if the budgeted funds are not spent, those are returned to the general fund which helps to fund parks projects as well. She provided an estimate of the playground project which would be funded through the special parks fund.

Commissioner Muller commented that if the Council authorizes \$75,000, why would they use funds from the special parks fund.

Ms. Lawrence commented that it was expected that part of the project cost would be funded through the special parks fund. She explained that there are restrictions on how the special parks fund can be used and therefore when projects can be funded through that source it is recommended as the other option for funding is the general fund and those dollars are used for projects that cannot be funded through the special parks fund.

Commissioner Muller recognized the large contribution that was made to the special park fund by the recently approved apartment building. She commented that there is not much land left for development and therefore it would be anticipated that the fund would not be available to use in the future.

Ms. Lawrence confirmed that future funding will be part of the joint meeting with the City Council.

Commissioner Sherer stated that the hope would be that in collaboration with the Council they could find a sustainable funding source for the future. He commented that the funds are not invested, therefore the sooner they use those funds the more they get in return as costs only increase in the future.

Commissioner Toth referenced the total project cost and asked if the bid is itemized and whether the Commission would see that itemized bid.

Ms. Lawrence replied that each of the project locations and scope was bid separately. She stated that it was not super detailed but there was a breakdown between labor and materials cost. She noted that most of these projects will go directly before the Council in order to save time and get projects going within the construction season.

Commissioner Meyer asked if staff wants to provide input on whether the special parks fund can be used for things such as resurfacing pickleball courts.

Ms. Lawrence recognized that residents have reached out requesting that the Marie Park pickleball courts within the hockey rink be resurfaced and staff estimates that work to be about \$25,000. She commented that the project was not budgeted for 2023, and staff will recommend that as a 2024 project. She stated that project would need to be funded through the general fund because the courts already exist with the same type of surfacing. She stated that staff will also recommend installing pickleball courts within the already paved hockey rink at Wentworth noting that would be an eligible special parks fund expense.

Commissioner Schifsky asked if the Wentworth project could be moved up if the Marie courts are deemed as unsafe for play.

Ms. Lawrence stated that has not been budgeted for 2023. She stated that the Council could provide that direction but with the length of time necessary to obtain quotes and a contractor, she did not believe that the courts would be complete for the season. She noted that staff also wanted to wait one year to allow the pavement to settle before applying the surfacing.

Commissioner Sherer provided some background information on the Marie Park and Friendly Hills pickleball courts, constructed in 2020 and 2021. He noted that from an engineering standpoint it would not be beneficial to have flooding on those spaces each year, as there should be a drainable base under that type of surface and therefore there will most likely be ongoing maintenance issues.

Public Works Director Ryan Ruzek replied that there was a really thick sand filling layer under the acrylic surface that has shrunk and believed that once they address that it would provide a better surface. He believed the original asphalt went down in 2013.

Commissioner Sherer asked if there is a drainable aggregate layer under the asphalt.

Ms. Ruzek replied that they do follow the standard paving process. He again believed that the sand filler has shrunk as it dried out.

## **8. New Business**

### **8.a Roger's Lake Skate Park Reconstruction**

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence stated that the goal for tonight is to provide direction for the next steps on this project. She provided background on the development of the skate park, which opened in 2004 and has been an asset to the community. She noted that the features were installed on an underutilized tennis court and the base is starting to fail, as are some of the features. She stated that the operation and maintenance of the skate park has become more challenging over the past five years. She stated that in 2020 a subcommittee was formed to discuss issues and opportunities and since that time the skate park users have worked to make that more family friendly. She stated that the subcommittee was paused in 2021 and staff brought forward a budget request in November 2022 to allocate \$300,000 for the skate park. She stated that since that time the subcommittee has reconvened to help develop the design for the skate park. She provided a photo of the existing facility and reviewed the project team members. She stated that in January, 2023 the subcommittee asked staff to reconsider a full concrete park, but the City Council directed staff to continue to design a modular feature skate park with concrete base within the allotted budget. She stated that the Council also asked staff to utilize a skatelite surfacing for project features, though more expensive, as it would result in quieter and more desirable riding surface. She provided details on the community engagement that has occurred throughout this process. She reviewed the proposal for the skate park base which would have an estimated cost of \$145,000 and would be a reduction in size from the existing size. She reviewed the proposed skate park features which were selected based off the input from the public engagement. She displayed the proposed design and proposed timeline. She also provided details on the budget impact, noting that as proposed the project would be over budget and provided options that the Commission could consider tonight. She stated that staff supports bringing the final design as proposed forward to the Council at its next meeting along with additional funding options.

Chair Blanks provided an opportunity for residents to speak.

Craig Williams, 2259 Field Stone Drive, stated that he has been involved with the subcommittee since 2020 and there has been a lot of discussion related to materials, size and cost. He thanked the Commission for bringing this project back as a priority. He stated that the subcommittee was not able to fully interact with the proposal options as the details on cost were not known at that time. He stated that the option to do nothing would be the worst as this is a desired amenity noting that skateboarding offers a physical opportunity for those that many not participate in organized sports. He stated that there were things that could be edited from the plan in order to save money, but recognized there is balance between special parks fund and general fund expenditures. He noted that some elements could be removed from the center and the mini ramp could be revitalized to be reused. He stated that the improvement from an asphalt surface to cement is a huge improvement in itself. He stated that he would not want a City Council member or City Attorney to discount that type of improvement. He referenced the option related to the bonding bill and provided an update noting that those funds would likely be available in 2024. He provided a contact the City can reach out about the legislative activity.

Joshua Paulson, 1709 Buchanan St NW in Minneapolis, stated that he is a regular visitor of the skate park and spent about 3.5 hours there today. He thanked Mr. Williams for his comments and agreed that those comments align with users of the park. He agreed with scaling back on the features or postponing to next year with hopes that additional funding could be gaining through the legislature. He agreed that the skate park is a well-used amenity and the option to do nothing should not be chosen. He commented that it is important to have a facility that is functional and promotes growth. He believed that the design as proposed looks very crowded and could cause conflict between users. He stated that opening some space would create flow

for people to use the space safely and provide space for users of all abilities to access space. He believed that Rogers Lake is a great location for the skate park and was glad to see it remaining in that location.

Commissioner Meyer asked for information on the mini ramp.

Ms. Lawrence identified the mini ramp on the design.

Commissioner Meyer asked which features would be recommended for removal.

Mr. Williams commented that there are five lanes on this plan and identified those lanes. He stated that with 8,000 square feet, if the lanes are done directly across, one unobservant user can create conflict with four or five other users. He suggested moving the spine ramp in the center and perhaps the grind pad to increase visibility.

Commissioner Meyer referenced the bonding bill concept and requirements that could come along with those funds. She noted that Mendota Heights has not qualified for other grants as those have been geared for underserved communities.

Mr. Williams stated that there are seven evaluation criteria and Mendota Heights already satisfies several of those. He commented that there are some that could be improved upon, but there would be time to do so. He noted that roller skating has been on the increase which has been great for increasing female users of the park. He noted that design build proposals will be higher priority. He noted that the contact he provided could provide more input on that issue.

Commissioner Sherer commented that in grants some expenses are eligible while others are not. He asked if the total project would be eligible or just the equipment.

Mr. Williams stated that the new wording that has been floated around would require a dollar-to-dollar match. He stated that dollar for dollar cannot be used to start the fundraising process, explaining that the funding should already be in place and the LGU should be able to demonstrate the ability to provide the matching funds.

Mr. Ruzek replied that this project may not score well in the eyes of the grant. He stated that he would fear that the park as designed may not score well for the grant program.

Commissioner Schifsky asked if the concrete option would score better.

Mr. Ruzek believed that would score better.

Commissioner Schifsky stated that wheelchair users have not been mentioned, noting that her youngest was a wheelchair user and loved skateparks. She commented that modular does not work as well for those users.

Commissioner Toth commented that years ago when the skate park was introduced there were questions as to why that park would be put in. He commented that he goes by the park daily and it is used all the time, even in the winter months as users shovel that surface for use. He was happy to hear that people from other communities also use the park and agreed that Rogers Lake is a great location. He recognized the proposed reduction in size which impacts the users of different abilities. He hoped that they could work through this to perhaps increase the size as safety of the users should be a consideration. He commented that there are adults

and children using the park every day and that should be a consideration when rebuilding the park to ensure it is done right.

Commissioner Muller stated that if they decrease the size the project would not be eligible for special park funds. She asked why the size would not be increased, using the special parks fund.

Ms. Lawrence explained that only the increased size, over the existing size would be eligible for special parks fund use. She noted that some of the new features would be eligible for special parks fund use. She stated that if the base size were increased that would substantially increase the cost which would be even more over budget.

Commissioner Muller asked if the change in surface material could be considered.

Ms. Lawrence stated that they have discussed that and did not believe that would be eligible for special park fund use.

Mr. Ruzek replied that there was a meeting with the City Attorney, and it was determined that changing from asphalt to concrete would not be eligible.

Ms. Lawrence stated that when they brought this forward to the Council in January for direction, there was direction from the Council to proceed with a concrete base and modular features. She did not think a higher budget request would be approved as the project total was supposed to be \$300,000. She stated that the Council agreed with the skatelite features, knowing that would increase the cost by 25 percent.

Commissioner Muller asked if there would be an option to remove the skatelite use.

Ms. Lawrence confirmed that could be an option, although the Council may not choose that option.

Commissioner Meyer noted that the current amount estimated to be over budget is in line with the direction of the Council to use the skatelite features.

Chair Blanks commented that his interjection would be to ask the Council to approve the plans as proposed with the budget overage, as this additional cost for the skatelite was known by the Council. He stated that he would prefer to continue with the better-quality surface as it lessens the noise and improves safety for users. He believed that this should move forward as proposed. He stated that while he would love to use bonding funds, it would be unknown as to whether the City would even qualify. He stated that perhaps that could be an option for a future phase that could increase the size.

Ms. Lawrence stated that staff had hoped that the total would not be this much with the skatelite, noting that the concrete costs have surprised them throughout this process. She stated that staff is comfortable presenting this to Council because of the justification.

Commissioner Sherer asked the basis of the budget of \$300,000. He stated that at one time there was going to be a study and asked if that occurred.

Ms. Lawrence confirmed that funds were spent on consultants to study the soils and surfacing and to develop the design. She stated that staff felt that \$300,000 would be adequate to rebuild a similar skate park.

Commissioner Sherer asked if there was a size and type of park in mind at that time.

Ms. Lawrence stated that the Council wanted to see a very similar modular skate park on a concrete base, which helped to develop the budget.

Chair Blanks commented that in 2020, that cost would have provided the same size park but with inflation, the size has been reduced.

Commissioner Sherer noted that some pricing has decreased and perhaps that will be the case for this project.

Mr. Ruzek commented that the investigation discovered poor soil conditions and provided details on the additional efforts that would be completed to increase the sustainability of the base. He stated that the concrete is estimated at \$9 per square foot but noted the additional line items for the soil corrections. He stated that the fill that is removed could perhaps be moved to the hill location in the park, which could provide a cost savings of \$8,000 to \$10,000 but could cause additional costs if there were to be a second phase. He stated that the sidewalk from the parking lot to the skate park would also need to be replaced. He did not believe the engineer overestimated the unit costs.

Commissioner Sherer asked if the proposal from the American Ramp Company would be negotiable.

Mr. Ruzek replied that those are set prices through the State contract. He noted that the features suggested for removal by the resident tonight would be eligible for special parks fund use. He stated that some of the equipment could be investigated to determine if there could be reuse but staff would also be comfortable moving forward as proposed as suggested by Chair Blanks. He stated that American Ramp Company is the only company on the State contract, but the base work would be bid.

Commissioner Meyer stated that in past discussions it was mentioned that there are other national companies that provide similar services. She felt locked in and uncomfortable that they have gone down this path rather than completing an RFP.

Chair Blanks commented that the challenge that they have is that company is the only one on the State contract.

Commissioner Meyer commented that the project could be put out to RFP and does not have to go off the State contract.

Mr. Ruzek stated that in that scenario another \$40,000 to \$50,000 would be spent developing plans for contractors to bid on.

Ms. Lawrence stated that the Council directed a modular park and that is the only contractor to do so.

Commissioner Muller stated that direction was only given a few months ago and ARC was already involved in the process long before that. She stated that the playground reviewed last month included proposals from three contractors.

Commissioner Meyer stated that she was simply voicing that she was uncomfortable, but they are too far at this point. She stated that her comments should be considered on future projects.

Commissioner Muller commented that she does not believe that the survey had full participation from the community because of the low response. She stated that she wants to ensure that the best features are being incorporated. She stated that as someone that does not have this knowledge, she would like the advice of actual users. She stated that no matter what the Commission says, the Council can take different action noting the recent change in colors for the playground.

Mr. Paulson commented that the feature in the very center, the spine and A-frame, could be removed to free up that center space along with the ramp to the side of it. He stated that maybe even the ramp at the top, connected to the mini ramp, unless that needs to be designed in that manner. He stated that the existing mini ramp could even be kept in that corner as that is one of the best half pipes in Minnesota. He stated that outside of one crack in the skatelite, which could be replaced, the ramp is in good condition. He stated that removing that center lane of ramps would improve the flow and functionality and a cost savings.

Chair Blanks recognized that would also be less congestion and increase safety.

Mr. Paulson stated that there are a lot of features in skateboarding, but it is more important to have functional space for all users rather than filling the space to capacity. He used the Roseville skate park as an example of a park that packs a lot of features into a small space. He stated that if the middle section were removed, the rails could then be moved into that space. He identified the core features that skaters look for in the park noting that the features they have recommended to be removed are not often well used.

Commissioner Sherer asked about the reduction that would be seen if those features were removed.

Mr. Ruzek replied that those are features that are new and would use special parks funds, which would reduce the budget.

Commissioner Meyer commented that she is not concerned as she would prefer not to include features that will not be used and will decrease safety.

Chair Blanks agreed with removing those center features as it sounds like it would increase safety and provide better flow to the park. He stated that does not change that they would still want to move this forward to the City Council to request additional funds. He asked if the Commission is comfortable asking the Council for more money for the project. He stated that the issue of equipment removal would be separate.

Commissioner Schifsky asked if increasing the size could use those special parks fund.

Mr. Ruzek confirmed that an increase in size would be eligible for special parks fund.



Commissioner Meyer commented that in order to be eligible for special parks fund use for the increased size, 4,000 square feet would need to be added to get back to the existing base size and then anything above that would be eligible for special parks fund use.

Commissioner Muller asked if the users would keep all the features if the size were the same as the existing park.

The users replied that they would still remove those features. It was noted that 10,000 square feet seems to be an ideal size.

Commissioner Toth referenced the budget of \$300,000 and asked what that decision was based upon.

Mr. Ruzek stated that in 2020 they discussed replacing the same park with some new features.

Ms. Lawrence stated that based on the input of the users features 17, 18 and 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29 would be removed, and features 15 and 16 would be shifted over.

Chair Blanks stated that he would want to double check the features that received votes through public engagement. He stated that if one of those features received a lot of votes, that should be considered as feedback was only provided by two users tonight. He stated that conversation can also be had with ARC as to opening up that center.

Ms. Lawrence agreed that staff was apprehensive in the playground designs last month about removing features to add more swings, as users could have voted for a certain design based on certain features. She confirmed that staff would compare these features proposed for removal with the votes received by users.

Mr. Paulson stated that all those features are great for a skate park, but not in the current locations. He agreed that there could be space for some of those features to remain if they were located in another area.

Commissioner Muller referenced the comment that there were grant funds available in 2021 that were not used and asked for more details.

Mr. Williams provided details on his conversations which noted that \$216,000 were left remaining available in the grant program in 2021.

Commissioner Meyer commented that the voting results were included in the packet and people really want a half pipe with no high priority for the other elements. She agreed that people like the mini ramp the City has.

Ms. Lawrence stated that staff has been in conversation with the Amateur Sports Commission (ASC) related to the bonding bill and timing. She stated that they could not provide any answers on the timing, and she has asked them to keep the City in the loop. She stated that ASC did not mention any current grant funding available and believed a 2025 or 2026 would be most likely if those funds were allocated.

Commissioner Muller asked for staff opinion on the mini ramp.

Ms. Lawrence replied that the mini ramp does not meet tier one standards. She stated that if the ramp is not replaced now, she was unsure when funding would be available for future replacement as there are a lot of CIP projects planned for the next few years.

Mr. Ruzek stated that the ramp can be repaired. He stated that ARC can provide that surface to reinforce existing features.

Commissioner Muller asked the plan for existing features.

Mr. Ruzek replied that there is no plan for that right now and noted that would be reviewed as things are approved. He noted that the City is limited in options for equipment disposal.

Commissioner Muller commented that it seems the existing equipment has the skatelite surfacing and therefore it is unfortunate that there was a push to get that when the direction was to rebuild the park in the same manner.

Ms. Lawrence stated that was an option staff provided to Council in order to receive more for the money.

Commissioner Muller asked if the surfacing is known to be quieter or just provides a smoother surface.

The users confirmed that the material is quieter.

Commissioner Sherer commented that it seems that there is minimal risk to getting quotes on the pad.

Mr. Ruzek replied that the pad will not be publicly bid, as the cost is below the threshold. He stated that the City has a list of eight contractors that would receive the information to bid the project. He noted the time constraint that the City would have for contractors to begin the work on July 10<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Sherer asked if an alternate could be provided that would be more flexible on the timeline.

Mr. Ruzek stated that the concern with timing would be that the features would not be available for use before the snow. He stated that if the bids are high, they would bring this back to review alternate options.

Commissioner Schifsky stated that part of the issue is that the base is being replaced because of the damage, therefore part of the cost would be demolition and disposal of that material. She asked if the existing park could remain with the new addition to be placed next to it.

Mr. Ruzek replied that there is not that amount of space. He explained the process that would be used to grind up the asphalt base that would be used to go under the new base. He noted that the bad soils under that asphalt would be removed.

Commissioner Toth referenced the 28-day curing process for concrete. He asked if that period would need to pass before the features can be installed. He noted that perhaps the existing park could be used for spring, summer and into fall with the concrete being poured with sufficient cure time and then features installed ready for use in the spring.

Ms. Lawrence replied that there is a detailed schedule, and her concern would be part of the cost is installation of equipment, therefore if the equipment is purchased and not installed there could be issued.

Mr. Ruzek commented that the 28-day cure has been factored into the timeline. He noted that some of the existing features may be available to be moved to Wentworth for skaters to use during construction.

*Motion Meyer/second Sherer to move this forward to City Council with the removal of the spine, A-frame, and ramp in the center and direct City staff to investigate whether the mini ramp could be reused.*

Further discussion: Commissioner Toth asked if potential expansion of the surface could be mentioned.

Commissioner Meyer commented that expanding could be looked at in the future if the City were able to obtain bonding or grant funds.

Commissioner Muller stated that she would amend the motion to consider keeping the A-frame in a different location.

Commissioner Meyer accepted that amendment.

Chair Blanks noted that the ultimate desire is to open up the center to improve the flow. He reiterated the motion to forward the proposal to City Council as proposed over budget, with direction to more or remove the A frame, spine, and ramp in the middle to increase flow, and investigate the potential to keep the mini ramp.

AYES 6: NAYS 0

### **8.b Friendly Hills Pickleball Light Program**

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence presented a request for recreational lights at Friendly Hills for pickleball use. She stated that recreational lights in the parks began in 2020, with a trial program approved at Marie Park for the fall of 2021 for basketball and pickleball use. She reviewed the timeline since that time involving light use at Marie Park and the request for similar lighting at Friendly Hills. She noted that Friendly Hills lighting did not move forward in 2022 based on resident input. She stated that the Council provided direction earlier this year to expand the lighting program to Friendly Hills and highlighted changes that have been made to Friendly Hills and the lighting program since the previous consideration in 2022. She provided an overview of the program at Marie Park. She provided details on the community engagement input received. She noted the differences between Marie Park and Friendly Hills related to topography and proximity to residential properties. She stated that two resident comments were received prior to the meeting and provided to the Commission. She stated that Council also directed staff to look into noise abatement at both Marie and Friendly Hills and stated that it would not be feasible to incorporate the recommendation from the noise mitigation company to increase the height of the hockey boards. She stated that staff would recommend planting additional trees to potentially lessen the noise to property owners. She stated that only one noise complaint has been received related to pickleball use at Marie Park. She identified potential tree locations for both Friendly Hills and Marie, noting that those locations would need input from the Natural Resources Coordinator. She stated that trees could also be provided to residents to plant on their private property.

Chair Blanks invited residents to provide input.

Mary Melzarek, 717 Navaho Lane, stated that her home is about 108 feet from the rink boards. She noted that she did provide similar input last year when this was discussed. She noted that last year it was agreed upon that the lighting program would not be implemented at Friendly Hills because of the proximity to homes and lack of topography change at Friendly Hills compared to Marie. She was pleased to see the mention of adding trees as a buffer. She commented that there was supposed to be a pickleball plan and lighting plan within the Strategic Plan but could not find that information in her research. She commented that the park did not have pickleball lighting last year but there was a note mentioning a fair amount of calls wondering why there were not lights at the park. She stated that signs were installed at Friendly Hills when the push button lighting was implemented, but that was not working at Friendly Hills as it was not approved for the lighting. She stated that Mendota Heights is one of the only communities that has added lighting for pickleball. She recognized that the decision is back before the Commission again this year, but nothing has been done that would be different to change the decision from last year. She stated that if something were to change, she would agree to try the lights for a season but is opposed until that time. She commented that the Friendly Hills courts are not favored for pickleball play because of the surface and rough condition of the courts. She stated that Marie Park users prefer to play on those courts.

Commissioner Muller commented that there have been some shades installed on the lights and after seeing how bright the lights are she would not recommend having the lights.

*Motion Meyer/second Blanks to recommend that pickleball lighting at Friendly Hills does not move forward, but that noise mitigation efforts do move forward for that location.*

AYES 6: NAYS 0

### **8.c Park QR Code Discussion**

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence provided background information on QR codes and how they could be used for public engagement. She stated that the Commission was asked to provide input as was the Natural Resources Commission as a potential partnership opportunity. She stated that there would not be a cost to design a QR code, only the cost to make the signs.

Chair Blanks asked if they should begin with a pilot program in certain parks.

Commissioner Schifsky stated that there will be a lot going on at Wentworth with upcoming improvement projects and perhaps that would be a good location to obtain feedback. Rogers Lake was also mentioned as a good location.

Commissioner Sherer asked what would be done with the input received.

Ms. Lawrence stated that would be up to the Commission. She stated that if input is solicited, there would need to be a plan for review to ensure that people feel their input is meaningful. She asked the type of information that the Commission would be looking for, noting that she would not want to use the QR codes as a method for people to not contact staff directly such as an emergency situation or bathrooms that need to be unlocked. She stated that the QR codes could be used to gain input on upcoming improvement projects, such as playground replacements.

Commissioner Meyer stated that she liked the ideas mentioned by Chair Blanks in his email, where the QR code brings the user to an informational page about the park. She stated that perhaps there is a button that users could push when they get to that page to report a maintenance issue such as a broken swing. She stated that they can then gauge how well that is used and received by the public and if it is a good way to obtain feedback, they can use it for other reasons. She stated that the pilot could begin with the code bringing the user to a page about the park, noting any upcoming events, and an option to report a maintenance issue; beginning with Wentworth and Rogers Lake parks.

Commissioner Muller stated that she likes this as a resource for people to find information and then gather data on how many times the codes are scanned by users. She stated that she would agree with highlighting natural plants and animals in the area and then information on trail routes.

Commissioner Meyer stated that Rogers Lake is a good location where people could learn different things, such as how to request a canoe rental space or that licenses are required for fishing.

Commissioner Muller agreed that this would be a helpful way to share additional information.

Commissioner Sherer stated that he was interested in how the information would be sorted and/or used. He stated that he often receives the same requests from residents when he is at Hagstrom King, requesting certain amenities and recognized that it will be work for someone to sift through the data. He stated that people provide input on things they want and then get frustrated when that is not provided.

Commissioner Meyer stated that is why she is suggesting to only include the option for residents to report a maintenance issue.

Commissioner Muller stated that she likes the concept of providing users with information on the park and natural features they can look for within the park.

Commissioner Meyer commented that there are things embedded within the climbing feature at Wentworth and users might find that interesting.

Commissioner Schifsky agreed that information about animals would be helpful and things that visitors could search for. She stated that if they continue to hear requests about drinking fountains or other features that will also be helpful to know. She stated that users may find a QR code as a less intimidating form of engagement.

Commissioner Muller asked what the sign may look like.

Ms. Lawrence stated that is one of the questions staff would have. She asked whether the Commission would like yard signs or more permanent street type signs. She stated that the Commission has provided a lot of great information that will need to be refined in order to move forward. She stated that building a website will take some time and recapped the ideas the Commission provided. She stated that it will probably take staff a couple months to prepare and then they can discuss the type of signage.

Commissioner Meyer commented that she would suggest a pilot at the two parks, Wentworth and Rogers Lake.

Commissioner Muller noted that a lot of the information on plants and animals would be the same in any park within Mendota Heights. She stated that other information, such as events, can simply be links to the City website.

Ms. Lawrence stated that she would provide the parks department with the maintenance issues reported and can provide the other data to the Commission. She stated that if issues are going to be reported via the QR code, staff will need to check those daily in order to respond appropriately.

Commissioner Meyer stated that the maintenance report feature could state that it is only checked once a week and immediate issues should be reported directly to City staff with the phone number.

Ms. Lawrence stated that she will continue to work on this and bring back a proposal.

Commissioner Muller commented that she found it helpful to look at the results from the ARC survey and that type of data from residents would be helpful and could help the Commission to prioritize future projects.

## **9. Unfinished Business**

### **9.a Parks and Recreation Strategic Planning Update**

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence provided a brief update on the strategic planning calendar.

## **10. Staff Announcements**

No comments.

## **11. Student Representative Update**

Student Representative Murphy commented that she has enjoyed seeing all the progress made on engaging youth in the community through events and programming. She also hoped that the Rogers Lake skate park will move forward.

## **12. Commission Comments and Park Updates**

Commissioner Meyer

- The nets were installed at Marie Park and pickleball will be busy with users

Commissioner Schifsky

- Thankful to be on the Commission and visit the different parks
- Her kids like the playground at Wentworth
- She was able to download the City events calendar to her phone which she found helpful

Chair Blanks

- A lot of kids out using the playgrounds
- Is excited for the upcoming music events at Market Square

- Attended the Tour de Rec at Marie Park and it was great to see the families in attendance

Commissioner Muller

- Thanked everyone for their work on the Rogers Lake Skate Park throughout the past few years to get to this point
- Great to see people out enjoying Rogers Lake

Commissioner Toth

- Public Works will be busy in the next month transitioning from the winter season
- Enjoyed seeing the ducks and geese at Rogers Lake

Commissioner Sherer

- Thanked the residents that provided input tonight
- Hoped that something could move forward for the Skate Park
- A lot of activity at Hagstrom King with people enjoying the weather
- People excited to get on the baseball field at Civic Center

Chair Blanks thanked staff for the preparation for this meeting and all the residents that provided input in person or via email.

**13. Adjourn**

*Motion Meyer/Second Muller to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 PM  
AYES 6: NAYS 0*

Minutes drafted by:  
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*Timesaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*