

CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS, DAKOTA COUNTY, MINNESOTA

PARKS AND RECREATION MEETING MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 12, 2023

The September meeting of the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Commission was held on Tuesday, September 12, 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 Sherer/second Muller to approve the agenda

AYES 6: NAYS 0

5.a Approval of Minutes from August 8, 2023 Regular Meeting

Motion Muller/second Schifsky to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting.

AYES 6: NAYS 0

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

None.

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 briefly reviewed the report, noting that the June financial report was also included and provided an overview. She highlighted record breaking rounds in both June and July and also noted that concession sales have increased as well. She commented that August was also a strong month and September has been strong thus far as well. She stated that all of the equipment that was ordered in 2021 has now been delivered and aeration was completed the previous week. She highlighted additional improvement projects that have been completed or will still be completed this season.

7.b Recreation Update

Recreation Program Coordinator Willow Eisfeldt provided an overview of the different events held during the Parks Celebration weekend. She highlighted upcoming events and programming opportunities.

Commissioner Muller thanked staff for their efforts for the Parks Celebration events. She commented that the events were great and there were many volunteers of all ages. She noted

that the Makers Market follows the District's 5K and encouraged people to participate in the 5K as well.

Commissioner Schifsky asked for details on Cycles and Cider and asked who the fixers would be.

Recreation Program Coordinator Willow Eisfeldt stated that she reached out to Dakota County and was able to secure some volunteers that assist with County bike fix it events. She stated that a staff member also has a family member with that skill that will be volunteering.

Commissioner Muller thanked staff for incorporating the new event.

7.c Parks Improvement Update

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence provided an overview of the report highlighting progress on the different improvement projects.

Commissioner Muller asked if skaters should remain off the concrete at Rogers Lake Park.

Ms. Lawrence confirmed that there are signs that the park is closed as the concrete needs to cure for 30 days. She stated that people will be made aware of when the concrete is available for use.

Commissioner Schifsky stated that perhaps better signage is needed as she saw people skating on her way into the meeting tonight.

Ms. Lawrence noted that there is also caution tape but noted that staff will need to find something better to block off that area.

8. New Business

8.a Establish Master Plan RFP Subcommittee

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence stated that staff is seeking two or three commissioners to serve on a Master Plan RFP Subcommittee. She stated that staff would like to begin working on the RFP now, explaining that if the project is included in the budget for 2024, they would be able to begin work much quicker than if the creation of the RFP is delayed until 2024. She recognized that all members may want to provide input and therefore once the subcommittee work is completed, it would come before the Commission for input. She stated that if the item is included in the budget, staff would issue the RFP in December.

Commissioners Meyer and Schifsky volunteered.

Commissioners Sherer and Toth commented that their schedules would not allow participation in the subcommittee.

Chair Blanks commented that he could also participate.

Motion Blanks/second Muller to appoint Chair Blanks, Commissioner Meyer, and Commissioner Schifsky to a subcommittee to establish a Master Plan RFP. AYES 6: NAYS 0

8.b Parks Tour Agenda

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence stated that the Commission annually holds a park tour and at the last meeting, October was chosen as the month for that tour. She noted that the tour will take the place of the regularly scheduled October meeting. She reviewed the parks that were included in the tour for the previous year. She noted that Valley Park has been requested as one of the locations and welcomed input on the other park locations.

Chair Blanks asked the next park assigned for remodel.

Ms. Lawrence noted that would be Ivy Hills. She stated that Valley was included in the CIP for next year but was pushed back to allow trail work to be completed.

Commissioner Meyer suggested Marie to review the pickleball courts. She noted that could be the last visit to allow staff to get back to City Hall easily.

Commissioner Sherer suggested Friendly Hills as well to compare the pickleball courts.

Commissioner Toth asked if they should focus on parks that need attention and have upcoming projects.

Commissioner Muller noted that Valley would be a good location because of the need for improvements and commented that would also give them an opportunity to look at the pavilion as the pavilion improvements keep getting put off.

Commissioner Meyer stated that perhaps Victoria Highlands would be a good choice because of the age of the swing set, as the swings were not replaced at the same time as the playground. She stated that she would not be opposed to Mendakota but has spent a fair amount of time there this summer as may have other members of the Commission.

Commissioner Muller noted that Mendakota could be a good fit as they go into the master planning process.

Ms. Lawrence provided details on the potential for that playground to be fully accessible, noting that is scheduled for five years out. She stated that they would be soliciting outside funding for that project and therefore it would be a different process than typical playground replacement projects.

Commissioner Sherer stated that Kensington could be another opportunity as they move into soccer season as it has nice fields but not a lot of parking.

Ms. Lawrence replied that facility is maxed out for the allowed soccer field hours, although it does not get large tournaments.

Commissioner Muller noted that would also provide an opportunity to review the fencing issue that was declined by the City Council.

Ms. Lawrence confirmed the parks as Valley, Marie, Friendly Hills, and Kensington and commented that staff would solidify the order of the visits.

9. Unfinished Business

9.a Parks and Recreation Strategic Planning Update

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence provided an update on the progress on the strategic goals.

Commissioner Meyer referenced community engagement, noting that it is great to do new and different things in the future. She noted that one of the intentions was to inform people about the Park Commission, encourage interested people to serve, and receive input in a less formal setting. She commented that she feels that it is important to meet people where they are rather than asking them to come to City Hall, where they may not feel as comfortable sharing their thoughts.

Ms. Lawrence recognized that community engagement is up to the Commission and if that is something the Commission wants to do, staff would support that, but staff will not take the lead.

Commissioner Meyer agreed, noting that she believed that they did get benefits out of the previous sessions.

Chair Blanks agreed as well, noting that he would like to increase visibility of the Commission at different events, suggesting t-shirts which would allow the public to know they are part of the Commission. He agreed that they did get a lot out of the engagement focusing on visibility and programming. He stated that they are not necessarily not doing community engagement anymore, but perhaps that is done more through interactions in the community rather than the focus groups.

Ms. Lawrence stated that they could move more quickly with nametags for the group, while t-shirts may take a bit longer to design.

Commissioner Schifsky agreed that nametags would be a good start.

Chair Blanks stated that he would also like to do t-shirts.

Ms. Lawrence confirmed that she could work with Chair Blanks and Commissioner Muller to develop a draft design for the shirts that could be presented to the Commission for review.

Commissioner Sherer encouraged the members of the Commission to engage with residents and groups, informally, to continue to gather input and different perspectives.

10. Staff Announcements

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence shared the following announcements:

- She will contact the subcommittee members to begin that process
- Seasonal employment positions have been posted on the website for the winter season
- Thanks to staff as it has been a busy few months with the summer recreation and event season
- Other events can be found on the City's website

11. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Murphy commented that it is great to see the Par 3 doing well and there appear to be some fun activities coming up in the next few weeks.

12. Commission Comments and Park Updates

Commissioner Sherer

- Everything is in good shape at Hagstrom King with the playground and basketball court are getting a lot of use and some teams are still using the fields
- The contractor did a fabulous job at Civic Center on the baseball field

Commissioner Toth

- Asked how often the woodchip material is leveled back out at Mendakota
- Spoke with a resident at Friendly Hills that was gathering acorns to feed the squirrels during the winter and a number of residents were playing pickleball

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence provided details on the monitoring of park condition done by season and regular parks staff.

Commissioner Muller

- Rogers Lake has been very active with people enjoying fishing and canoeing and noted people skating on the concrete
- Asked about a pedestrian trail crossing
- Kensington looks great but the fencing is rusted

Public Works Director Ryan Ruzek provided an update on the timing of that pedestrian crossing as part of a MnDOT project.

Chair Blanks

- Market Square is great and there is a new restaurant open
- Valley Park is a great park, and the basketball court was being used by young children

Commissioner Schifsky

- Was impressed with the new concrete pad at Rogers Lake, noting that she also saw people skating on the surface
- Ivy Hills looks great
- It is great to see the projects underway at Wentworth

Commissioner Meyer

- Marie has been busy with pickleball play
- Valley View Heights is also wonderful with the new playground equipment
- Echoed thanks to staff for the events that have occurred this year and those yet to come

13. Adjourn

Motion Muller/Second Toth to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 PM

AYES 6: NAYS 0

Minutes drafted by:
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