

CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS
DAKOTA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA

Minutes of the Parks and Recreation Commission Work Session
October 3, 2023

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a work session of the Parks and Recreation Commission, City of Mendota Heights, Minnesota began at Kensington Park: 2627 Concord Way, Mendota Heights MN.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jaffrey Blanks called the meeting to order at 4:32pm. Commissioners Muller, Schifsky, Toth, Meyer (arrived at 4:45pm) and Hanson were also present. Commissioner Sherer was absent.

City staff present included Meredith Lawrence, Parks and Recreation Manager and Ryan Ruzek, Public Works Director.

TOUR OF KENSINGTON PARK

The commission took a look at the fence at Kensington Park on the Southern portion of the park that backs up to Highway 494. Staff discussed that this project was not included in the 2024 budget and that the next year will be a good opportunity to seek potential alternatives to a chain-link fence replacement. The Commission discussed with staff the usage of the fields and the concession stand, as well as the process to obtain a permit for the picnic shelter.

Commissioner Muller commented that the new lilac bushes look wonderful. Public Works Director Ruzek discussed with the commission the potential greenway project and trail connection that is proposed to go through Kensington Park.

TOUR OF FRIENDLY HILLS PARK

The Commission reviewed the pickleball courts and discussed the surface and potential options for additional pickleball courts at the park moving forward. Commissioner Schifsky suggested that the courts be repositioned in the future and that 10 courts are included in the hockey rink in the future. The Commission discussed the need for dedicated pickleball courts within the community as a whole.

Commissioner Muller brought up concerns in the park regarding trail connectivity from the parking lot, in addition to the lack of accessibility.

Parks and Recreation Manager Lawrence discussed recent vandalism at Friendly Hills Park within the tennis courts and next steps for remedying the issue.

The Commission reviewed the playground at the park and discussed the need for the replacement of the swing set. The Commission discussed options when the playground is replaced. This project is currently slated for a replacement in 2026. Commissioner Schifsky suggested a nature-based playground be considered. Staff discussed potential opportunities and constraints with a nature-based playground moving forward.

TOUR OF VALLEY PARK

The Commission reviewed the current state of the trail system through Valley Park. Public Works Director Ruzek discussed Dakota County taking over the greenway and the potential changes the park and trail system will undergo. Public Works Director Ruzek discussed with the Commission that Dakota County offered to replace the existing tennis courts with new pickleball courts free of cost to the City due to the potential encroachment of the tennis fence, but that the City Council was not in favor of that idea.

The Commission discussed the importance of adding electricity to the new picnic shelter replacement at Valley Park in the future. In reviewing the playground, the Commission discussed the importance of providing inclusive playgrounds that provide opportunities to all residents regardless of ability or physical limitations.

TOUR OF MARIE PARK

The Commission was excited to see the tennis courts being used at Marie Park and commented that each park that was visited that evening with tennis courts had residents using them which was positive. The Commission reviewed the surface of the pickleball courts within the hockey rink and enjoyed seeing the lights being used for nighttime pickleball play. Commissioner Hanson asked if the nets could be replaced with real pickleball nets and staff said they would look into it.

The Commission reviewed the playground and discussed how positive and successful this project has been. Staff discussed with the commission that included in the preliminary budget for 2024 included funding for the addition of dugouts at the field and infield renovation work to provide a better and safer playing surface for users.

Parks and Recreation Manager Meredith Lawrence summarized the comments heard from the commissioners and discussed upcoming recreation programs and events.

The commission adjourned the meeting at 6:35pm.

Minutes Taken By:
Meredith Lawrence
Parks and Recreation Manager