

MINUTES
WEST ST. PAUL PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
March 12, 2019

Park & Rec. Members Present: Bonnie Bellows, Jay DeLaRosby, Brad Erickson, Dave Lynch, Mike Petrasek

Non-voting Members Present: Sharon G. Hatfield, Parks and Public Works Administrative Specialist; John Justen, Councilperson; Dave Schletty, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director

Guests: Jim Englin, Ann Enright, Ed Enright, Doug Fromm, Steve Heilman, Kevin Hendricks, Greg Peine, Polly Saatzer, James Strobel, Rob Wedewer

1. **ROLL CALL**
2. **ADOPT MINUTES**

Chair Petrasek called the meeting to order at 5:29 pm.

Member DeLaRosby made a clarification of his remarks regarding the aquatics facility from the February 12, 2019 meeting. There are only three 50-meter pools in the tri state area, (not in the area). The U of MN is the only one in the metro area. Competitive swimmers pay a \$50 registration fee and \$7 per splash. It was meant to give an example of [the possibility of generating] \$20,000 plus per weekend.

The committee approved the minutes from the February 12, 2019 meeting with the clarification.

3. **NEW BUSINESS**

- a. **Public Hearing- Basketball at Haskell and Oakdale Parks**

DeLaRosby gave some background to the discussion. He said that ten-twelve years ago the city took down the rims and backboards in the parks that abut the City of St. Paul. There were many complaints about the activity, (fights and drug dealing, general disturbances) in these small parks. The removal of the hoops was to end after a six-month period. The basketball hoop parts have since been reused and/or thrown away. The city still has the infrastructure in place (but no amenity) for the basketball hoops. There have been numerous requests for basketball to return in both Haskell and Oakdale Parks. The Parks and Recreation Committee has discussed the topic in previous meetings and has talked with former committee members and with the police department. The city needs to have public commentary before reinstituting the hoops. DeLaRosby said that conditions have changed in the parks. The city has trimmed the brush and the trees in the parks for better sight lines for the police. There is also an office assigned to the parks. There will be signs clearly stating the hours of the park. [More importantly,] the city will not put up full-court basketball in the parks; only half-court basketball will be installed.

Petrasek said that DeLaRosby's summary was well-put. Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Schletty further clarified that the committee will listen to the community and then make a recommendation to Council. Council will review the recommendation. Even if Council decides to put up the hoops, there is still a matter of the expense of putting up the new basketball hoops. The hoops will not be put up in the near future.

Petrasek opened the discussion to the public. Schletty interjected and said that he had email input from residents. Brant Skalsky, who lives near Oakdale Park, has lived there for thirteen years. He would like the hoops to come back. There are younger families in the

area now. He would like to “see how it goes.” He would like to play basketball with his nine-year old son. Linda Jewell of Haskell Park said that she has live in West St. Paul since she was twelve-years old, and she is now sixty-eight years old. When the neighborhood was built in 1985, she told the builder, they made it just for me. She and her grandchildren have enjoyed the park. The neighborhood has changed from older adults to children. The tennis court is a waste of money. She talked about how she could count the number of times that people have played tennis on one hand. She would like the hoops returned. Morgan Kavanaugh from the Planning Commission strongly supports the return of the hoops to all parks. It is part of the year 2040 plan. The parks [will be made] more equitable, especially to people of color. [The hoops are a] good step toward that goal.

Member Erickson asked if there were the only email responses. Schletty said yes, (with no phone calls).

The discussion opened to the public. Ed Enright of Arion has lived at his home since 1993. He has seen all the problems, which include trash and drug dealing; cars would just show up. Adults would come to the park and push kids off the courts. Take over the playground. There was a lot of profanity and drinking. There was a lot of drug exchange. People would show up at all times of the morning and night. You can hear the thump, thump of the basketball. The park is very small second only to Dodd Park. There is no off-street parking. The parking around the park is an issue for the nearby residents. When the hoops were taken away from Haskell Park, people went searching for another area. The parking spills over to the residential area. The license plates for the cars in the parks were from a different area. Basketball in West St. Paul brings many problems to people who live near the hoops. The committee had a discussion about the problems at its June 12, 2018 meeting. The city still knows about these issues. There is a long history. The city took basketball off the agenda for the Sports Complex, which is 3 acres and does not abut [backyards.] As a property owner, he does not want to have the graffiti and the trash associated with the basketball courts. He finds it shocking that the city is still considering the hoops. Enright talked about the city website, and how it lists basketball as an activity at these parks. He asked if the [reinstallation] is a “done deal.” Petrasek said that it is not a done deal. The website has not been updated. It was supposed to be a six months to a year before the hoops [discussion] was to be revisited. It is the committee’s hope and belief that the same problems will not be there. There is no way to know that now. The hoops could be enjoyable.

Polly Saatzer spoke before the committee. She lives on MacArthur and Oakdale and her house is very near the basketball hoops. She agrees with Enright. She said that after the hoops came down, the park truly became a family park. Before, the young people were afraid to come to the park. She has not had to call the police once since the hoops were taken away. The city should look at the history of the police calls regarding the park to help with the perception of change. She asked that the city please not to not put up the hoops. The park is very small and in the summer, you near everything in the park if your windows are open. She said that the adjustable hoops are not good either; the children ride on them.

James Stroebel, from 180 Bernard E spoke. He has lived there for twenty-five years. He has raised two daughters, eight years apart. They have been kicked out of the park because of sexual comments. It was horrible. He would ground them if they went there. Eight years went by and nothing changed. Before the hoops came down there were fights, litter, profanity all day and drug use No families went to the park. People would come behind the bushes and do drugs. Now they see families, strollers and picnics. There is no profanity now. He is dead against the basketball hoops. Doug Fromm, from 3 Haskell E said that he

is equidistant from both parks. He is a former committee member. He said that before the temporary takedown, "it was pretty bad." The sad thing about it is that he had a daughter that grew up without the park. He does support putting up the hoops but only in a half-court. He said it was the full-court basketball was the issue. He would like to see the hoops come up on a trial basis. He understands the concerns. If the problems came back, they would have to come back down. Steve Heilman from 281 Mainzer, came before the committee. He has lived there for 17 years. He said when the hoops came down there was a night and day difference in the park. He has two issues: one is the behavior. You see people parked there with boom boxes, smoking of various types. The other issue is the parking issues. People would walk through his yard. His yard was littered with bottles, condoms. His retaining wall was spray-painted and "tagged" [with graffiti.] It was awesome when the [hoops] came down. He is against the hoops. He asked if parking were allowed in Haskell Park. Schletty answered, "Technically not. It is only allowed in winter. Schletty said that the city plans to put a chain barrier to hinder people going through the yard. Greg Peine from MacArthur spoke before the committee. He has lived there for twenty-six years. He has seen it all. He has had kids on bikes going through his yard, up to his garage door and others wandering through his yard. He does not want it anymore. He does not want his dog to have to chase the kids out of his yard. He wants the park to be safe for kids in his neighborhood and does not want other kids bringing in trash. He does not want the children in his neighborhood harassed by other children. He would like the park to be better patrolled.

Jon Englin of 352 Haskell Street E, a former councilman came before the committee. He is the one who took down the hoops down in the first place. He said that no one approached him regarding the history of the parks. The issue was revisited in council open council work sessions informally. The hoops were not taken down because of the proximity to St. Paul. They were taken down because of behavior taking place there. To say that the [issue] was not revisited is false. It was discussed at the Open Council Work Session at 6 months and a year after the hoops were taken down. Informally the city would hear from people how it was going. [The city] needs to listen to people that about the park, not people who are shadowed by it. They have to deal with the sexual harassment, the drugs and the urination. It started in Oakdale Park and then went to Haskell Park. The police reserves will not take care of the problems. They [problem] people intimidate little kids and the police reserves. The police reserves do not have the power to do anything about it. The [problem] people in the park were from Brooklyn Park and the northwest metro. The pocket parks were too small. Basketball was pushed off to the Sports Complex, Marthaler and Harmon Park. The city needs to learn from history. It is not a good idea, [to put the hoops back.] History will repeat itself.

Judy Rangel of Ward II came before the committee and acknowledged that the problems in the parks were awful. She is concerned with the costs of putting the basketball hoops back in the parks. She would like to have the basketball hoops back. She said that many people coming to the park live in the apartments, (Colby and Westwood Ridge), and they are people of color. She said that many white people are scared of people of color. She would like the residents to make a community effort to talk to the people in the parks. She asked why leave it to the cops and the Police Reserves and the Park and Rec Board [to handle the situation.] She urged residents to be brave, talk to people, and have some presence. [We need to talk] so we are not scared of people.

Kevin Hendricks of 988 Seminole, spoke. He would like to have the basketball available in the city. The city has lost many basketball hoops. Harmon Park could handle the basketball games in the past. Basketball is an inexpensive sport. Tennis is an expensive sport. The city

needs to encourage basketball somewhere. With the problems that are being discussed, he would like to know why police presence could not adjust it. Samantha Green, member of the Planning Commission and resident of Ward I, came to speak before the committee. She said that it is part of the 2040 plan for basketball hoops to be reinstalled in the Haskell and Oakdale Parks to make the parks more equitable. She said that it is not a huge stretch to have two more half-courts in the city. She feels it was negligent on the part of the City to throw away the parts to the basketball hoops. Installing a half-court instead of a full-court should take care of the problems. She said that the replacement of the hoops in the parks is a small step toward full capacity in the parks. Schletty clarified what happened to the parts of the basketball equipment. Parts and pieces of the Haskell/Oakdale equipment were used to replace the hoops in Weschcke Park. [These hoops were later illegally destroyed/taken down by an unknown resident.] Petrasek said, "Don't anybody get any ideas." When the Public Works Maintenance Facility was moved [to Marie Avenue,] the leftover parts were thrown away.

Petrasek closed the comments from the guests at the meeting and asked for members to comment.

DeLaRosby talked about his own experiences. He lives off Schletty Lane near Oakdale; he moved there two years ago. He wanted to play basketball at Oakdale but found that there were no hoops in the courts. It wasn't until he got on to the committee that he talked to Doug [Fromm] and Chief Shaver. learned informally that the removal of the hoops was supposed to be a temporary solution. Doug said that because the hoops were taken down in St. Paul, people were pushed into our neighborhoods. DeLaRosby read articles on this phenomenon in the 2000's: common practice to police basketball because of the secondary activity. DeLaRosby said that the sport of basketball does not produce crime. The amenity has been taken away for more than a decade. "The punishment does not fit the crimes that took place." He does not believe these people are lurking 15 years later for a hoop to come back up and to take over the parks again. People like him want his son to be able to play basketball. There are no Ward I hoops. It is about equitable parks. Ward I has the highest concentration of apartment dwellers. Not everyone can afford hockey. The city is only putting amenities back, not building something [new.] The city does not have the ability to repurpose the courts. The city will make efforts to make it safer and to deal [with problems better.] A concession was made to make the courts safer. A permanent ban of the sport in our parks is not the answer.

Bellows said that she had heard about the problems with the basketball courts and how awful the conditions were. If the half-courts are put back into the parks, it will be done for certain time limit.

Erickson asked about issues in the other parks. Schletty said that there have been issues in the other parks with their basketball courts.

Bellows said that it has been ten-twelve years since the hoops were taken down. She said that she understands the why residents would protest if the hoops were put up only one year after the problems occurred. She would like more research to be done about the hoops in St. Paul. She said it is a difficult situation and if she lived there, she would be horrified too. However, DeLaRosby has a point; there are no hoops in Ward I.

Petrasek asked for a motion from the committee. He asked the committee if they recommend or not recommend reinstalling the basketball hoops in Haskell and Oakdale Parks, or if they would like to table the discussion.

A motion was made to table the discussion until after the committee reviews reports from the Weschcke and the information regarding the St. Paul basketball hoops. Discussion followed. DeLaRosby said that there have been formal requests for amenities that support young teenagers. The city has had a request for a skate park. There is a gap in programming in the park system. The city does not have a community center except for the YMCA, which may not be staying. The city needs to be forward thinking. Mendota Heights Athletic Association is taking over and West St. Paul can do a better job. The infrastructure is in place for basketball. The residents around the parks should not be surprised to see people convocating in the parks. We should trust believe in and trust the city staff to handle the problems. Petrasek asked the committee if they would like to table the discussion until either the April meeting.

The motion carried. All Ayes.

b. Consider Colors for Sports Complex Buildings

Schletty said the Sports Complex renovations have been finalized. Schletty showed the committee some paint samples for the storage building. Schletty asked members to put on their “decorator hats.” The committee liked the blue and gray color scheme. The committee talked about the value of consistency throughout all the parks. Schletty said that the committee will also review the new warming house structures.

c. Consider Garlough Park Name Change

Schletty was approached by Mike Minea. He would like to rename of Garlough Park in honor of their family. The Minea family has a rich history in West St. Paul. They had a forty-acre farm in the Charlton/Wentworth neighborhood area. Schletty provided the history to members and asked for their recommendation. Schletty said that the city bought the land from the school district and named the park, Garlough Park. The land was not necessarily desirable, “developable” land.

The committee discussed the name change. Erickson asked if there are still Mineas in West St. Paul. Schletty said that Mike Minea’s sister still lives in West St. Paul. Bellows said [changing the name of the park] might be a problem if there are other requests. Lynch said that most of the parks were named after important people in West St. Paul history. He is in favor of changing the name. Lynch said, for consistency, the city might want to name the parks after West St. Paul residents. DeLaRosby said that Garlough is a beloved name from the school district. It is a name that people cared about and there is there is [already] a Minea Street. To change the name of a park is a big request. Schletty said there are many streets named after important people. There is even a Schletty street, (named after a unrelated Schletty family.) To his knowledge, the Mineas have not served on a city board, city staff or on council or as an alderman. Marthaler was named after the family who did serve [on city council.]. Weschcke Park was named after the family that donated the park. Kennedy was a former council member and an advocate for the park system. He served on the Parks committee as well. A number of parks were named after schools. Dodd was named after the Dodd School. Emerson and Oakdale were named after the schools. Lynch remarked that both Dodd and Weschke are important people in Minnesota history. Schletty said that the committee has no history regarding the renaming of parks. Petrasek said that he cannot remember ever renaming a park in West St. Paul. The [renaming] might open a “can of worms.” There is some value in the name Garlough. There is some expense in renaming a park. A decision to rename a park would be precedence setting. Petrasek’s recommendation would be to have the city staff work with the family for a commemorative plaque, statue or monument in Garlough

Park. Erickson said that five years from now there might be controversy in renaming the park and the city would not know the effects. Schletty mentioned the Stebbins tennis courts in Marthaler Park and the John Pelano/Wolters fields in Harmon Park were named in honor of important residents. DeLaRosby suggested collecting historical facts and figure out how to honor the families in the future.

Lynch made a motion to table the request. Discussion followed. Bellows asked why he wanted to table the discussion. Lynch is not in favor of killing the discussion for the reason that the city has never done it before. Petrasek said that there were four to five reasons why the committee has chosen to reject the request. The reasons included : setting a precedence, the value of the Garlough name, the street named after the Mineas and the cost of rebranding. The motion died. Ayes- 2 Nays-3

A motion was made to reject renaming the park at this time in the absence of funding. Discussion followed. Lynch asked how the motion was different than tabling the request. DeLaRosby said the motion allows another [entity] to pick up the request. Erickson asked how the motion was different from tabling the discussion to review more information from the family. Bellows said that the committee has already received the history of the Mineas and the Minea family has not appeared before the committee. Bellows would like to rephrase the motion reflecting that the Minea family has a long history of serving the City of West St. Paul and the committee would like to help them honor their family. DeLaRosby simplified the motion to rejecting the renaming Garlough Park. The motion carried. Ayes-3, Nays-2

Petrasek said that the Minea family could approach city council directly. Schletty said he would inform Council of the committee stance.

4. OLD BUSINESS-NA

5. OTHER

a. City Council Updates- NA.

b. Staff Updates

- i. Easter Event Planning-** Schletty talked about the upcoming Easter event. He asked if committee members would like to double the number of eggs for the event to 2,000 per field (4,000 total.) Members reduced the number of eggs being ordered to 1,500 per field. To reduce costs members, volunteered to fill the eggs instead of ordering prefilled eggs.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The committee members adjourned at 7:02pm. The next Park and Recreation Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 9, 2019 at 5:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon G. Hatfield