

WEST ST. PAUL PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
July 14, 2020

Parks & Rec. Members Present: Bonnie Bellows, Jay DeLaRosby, Kirsten Mulraney, Bob Gausman, Dave Lynch, Mike Petrasek

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

Guest: Kevin Hendricks

1. ROLL CALL

2. REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES

Chair Petrasek called the meeting to order at 5:29 pm. Because of the long interval between meetings, Petrasek talked about what the committee was doing pre-COVID-19: the Bike Path Feasibility Study, the Park Inventory, and the Easter egg stuffing activity. Parks and Recreation Assistant Director Schletty said that most of the candy has since been eaten by City staff.

The meeting minutes from March 10, 2020 meeting were approved.

3. NEW BUSINESS

a. August Meeting Date

Schletty said that the Committee will not be able to meet on Tuesday, August 11 because the date is an Election Day. Committee members discussed meeting either on August 4 or August 12.

Schletty talked about future meetings; they will be televised. (Not the August meeting.) The City Manager would like all meetings to be televised. Most cities do it. [It is] important for transparency and people who are interested can watch the meetings. Member Gausman said, "It'll make us celebrities."

A motion was made to meet on August 12. The motion carried.

4. OLD BUSINESS

a. Coordination of Future Park Inventory- The committee discussed which parks should be inventoried at the next meeting. Member Lynch suggested Weschcke and Mud Lake.

Weschcke Park has had many changes and Mud Lake is nearby. Member Mulraney asked if there were many volunteers for the Mud Lake clean-up. Lynch said that he has one volunteer. The committee decided to inventory Weschcke and Mud Lake parks at the August meeting. Schletty will send out update materials to committee members. Member Bellows asked about the pond water overflow from Weschcke Park to the street. Schletty said that the five-inch storm event brought the level up and an outlet that got plugged may have brought the water to the street. The issue has been fixed. The pond has been widened and has expanded capacity. There are plans to add a mix of trees to the park [for beautification.]

b. Art Park Subcommittee- Kevin Hendricks gave a progress update of the Art Park project.

Much has changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hendricks said that trying to plan was a "nightmare." The latest change is that he is going to receive input from residents virtually with an On-Demand Survey. The survey will be available in early August. To keep socially distant, participants will be asked to write a word on a tile instead of gluing tiles to the mosaic. Fifteen participants can "cycle-through" at a time in a two hour time frame to write the word on the tile. The tile may have a certain theme or participants may write the same word. The tile writing will also enable seniors to participate while maintaining social distance. Residents will be able to respond to the survey until August 26. The feedback will be worked into the plan by Lori, [the artist.]. There will be two outdoor painting meetings, Sept 12 and Sept 16, one in Marthaler Park and one in the Sports Complex. The tile meeting on September 19 could

probably be held at Harmon Park with ten people at a time for a couple hours. Participants would also be able to come to Lori's shop in St. Paul. The best case scenario for the installation of the mosaic is late October. If not, spring would be fine as well. Hendricks will work with staff to figure out the video and survey. He will also work on the Facebook page. He must also raise \$1,000 for the grant requirements. Bellows asked about the size of the tile. It is about one by two inches. Schletty said it is a domino-sized tile. Petrasek thanked Hendricks for his work.

5. **OTHER**

a. **City Council Update-** Councilperson Berry asked Schletty to update the Committee on the River to River Trail project.

b. **Staff Update**

i. **River to River Trail Update-** Schletty reported that Council authorized the sale of thirty feet of right of way on Crawford Drive to Dakota County. The County Board passed a Joint Powers Agreement [for the completion of the trail design going through Marthaler and Garlough Parks.] There is now a partnership between the City and the County. The County will provide \$60 K for the trail and the City will provide \$15 K. The City is in charge of the design of the trail. The City will hire an outside firm for the design. There is also a cooperative agreement with MN DOT to construct the tunnel. Eureka Construction has been hired for the construction of the tunnel. Construction may start this summer. Bellows asked about the plans the committee recommended for Marthaler Park. Schletty said that the plans were never officially adopted by Council; they did give their blessing on them. Currently, there is no funding for the reconstruction of the park; however, the Master Plan is still in play.

ii. **Pickleball-** The City Manager was approached about using the rink [in Harmon Park] for a Pickleball court. Schletty said that a court could be put up in the rink with temporary fences and nets. The City Manager would like the committee to discuss if pickleball should be a priority. Lynch asked if Pickleball should be at Harmon Park; Harmon is a youth-sports park. Schletty does not think it would be a problem. Member DeLaRosby said that Pickleball was immensely popular at the YMCA and now is no longer available. Gausman said that City could promote the use of the horseshoe court; it is very inexpensive to play. Schletty said that it has been used more recently and the Horseshoe Club has seen a resurgence. Hendricks said that the hockey rink was used for the Skate Against Hate roller skating event. Two hundred people participated in the event. There is talk about doing the event again. There are also neighborhood children who use the rink sporadically in the summer for skateboarding and rollerhockey. Schletty said that the nets/fencing for Pickleball could be taken down to allow for other court uses. The committee may want to investigate how often the tennis courts are being used. DeLaRosby talked about regulated use in IGH and mentioned the Inver Grove Heights North Valley Park; Schletty said that the courts there have been permanently converted to Pickleball. Mulraney said that it would be great idea to use an underused amenity; as long as it could be converted back to skating. Schletty talked about the amenities in Harmon Park and that the closure of the restrooms was strictly COVID-19 related. The City will soon expand the hours of the Splashpad to weekdays, 10 am-6pm, and weekends, 12 Noon -8pm. Petrasek asked the committee if there was a motion to put Pickleball in Harmon Park. Schletty suggested that committee first perform the inventory, and then decide if they still want to keep all of the tennis courts. There is a capital improvement budget set for 10 years. Prioritizing Pickleball would involve some "shifting."

iii. **Park Dedication Fees-**Petrasek asked about the Park Dedication fees and if the Committee still has any discretionary money to use for remodeling or new projects. Schletty related a history of how the Parks Dedication Fees came about. Back when Petrasek was a rookie, about the year 2000, the Park Director introduced the idea of Park Dedication Fees and [city] development. It was something that most cities already had; Council adopted it and it became part of City Code. Any time a new development comes

in and redevelops a site or replats a site, a park dedication fee is charged. The fee is based on a number of things, like the type of property commercial or residential and the acreage of the site. There is a formula for charging a site per acre or for residential developments, per number of units being built, as in an apartment building. A development site can only be charged once. Lowes was one of the first projects that was charged dedication fees. The project brought in almost a half million dollars in park dedication fees. It had been never been charged before and the site had to be replatted. Fees can be used for very specific uses: improvements or for purchasing a new property. Harmon Park used about one quarter- one half million dollars of park dedication fees. The City has used the fees for new playground equipment. Years ago, the committee would review the fees. It was almost always something the committee would approve and pass on to Council. However in about 2008, the Community Development Director asked to have more ways to help draw in developers to West St. Paul. He was given the authority by Council to negotiate park dedication fees. Any modification of the fees is reviewed by Council. If the Dominion project in Signal Hill is approved, the City would receive over \$400 K in park dedication fees. The entire site would be replatted, including the rest of Signal Hills site. Schletty talked with the Finance Director; there is \$750K in the fund. It is not all from development; State Aid (LGA) contributed funding as well. Schletty said that the funds are not “a checkbook.” Using the fees has to align with the budget [and the ten-year plan.]. Mendota Heights has about \$750K as well, but that city does not have the same development advantages that West St. Paul has. Schletty noted that developers do not have to necessarily pay the park dedication fees if they have already designated part of their site plan to park space. The former golf course site plan is an example of this.

- iv. **Tree Planting Efforts**-The City Manager also wanted Schletty to talk about the tree planting efforts and about trees as an important part of the infrastructure. The City treats all of its boulevard trees as part of the Emerald Ash Borer plan. The City Manager asked Schletty to come up with an inventory and see where the City has gaps and where replacement is needed. The City received a grant from the DNR for \$25K specifically for tree planting. It will be used over the next year to replenish boulevard trees and parks trees. The City Manager would also like to institute a new program in which developers pay into a fund for new trees if they cannot fulfill the development site requirements for tree planting. Under the new program, the developer would pay the City for the trees. In this way, the City would not be struggling to pay for new trees.

c. **Comments**

- i. **Robert Street Plantings**: Bellows said that plantings on Robert Street is very nice. Schletty said that there is a temporary team of 3 really good ladies that are working on plantings all over the City. They work as a pack; they spent one whole day on the rain garden beds in Harmon. Gausman said that the improvement on the north side of Marthaler Park has really taken off. Schletty said that they are finishing resurfacing the basketball court this week and try to match the color scheme of the playground. They are also finishing the volleyball court. Picnic tables have been added as well.
- ii. **Request to Wear Masks**: DeLaRosby made a request that because the committee has reconvened during the pandemic, and especially because the meetings are indoors, that all participants wear masks. Schletty said absolutely, he could make the request. However, unless the City officially takes steps toward a mandate, a person can still abstain from wearing a mask. DeLaRosby said that the televised meetings would be a good [opportunity]for the community to see best practices. He could provide spare masks for the meetings. Schletty added that if anyone is uncomfortable meeting in person, a webex conference could be set up.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The committee members adjourned at 6:21 pm. The next Park and Recreation Committee meeting will take place on Wednesday, August 12, 2020 at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon G. Hatfield