

**STAFF SUMMARY
CITY OF MINNETONKA
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
MONDAY, JUNE 11, 2007
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Council Present: Dick Allendorf, Bob Ellingson, Terry Schneider, Al Thomas, Brad Wiersum, and Mayor Jan Callison

Council Absent: Tony Wagner

Staff: John Gunyou, Geralyn Barone, Virg Herrmann, Jeff Dulac, David Maeda

Callison called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. City Manager John Gunyou gave an update on upcoming meetings. There is no meeting June 18. The next council meeting will be June 25. The city's Summer Festival and Ice Cream Social is Saturday, June 23. Callison said that she received a phone call from Bennett Family Park inviting people to the groundbreaking for their Miracle Field on Saturday, June 16 beginning at 10 a.m. She said the Headwaters Creek celebration is Wednesday, June 13.

1. LOGIS Map demonstration

Virg Herrmann from the engineering department gave a presentation of the LOGIS geographic information system mapping software.

Thomas asked the difference between the software and the mapping options available via the Hennepin County web site. Herrmann pointed out the different layer options such as adding lot lines, house numbers, street names, and wetland information to the city map. Thomas asked if the information on the map can be used to determine property line disputes. Herrmann said no, that the information on the map is a good representation but is not a survey. Gunyou pointed out the LOGIS map software is for internal city use only and that the Hennepin County system is designed to provide public access.

2. Boards and commissions interviews

Callison said there is one youth position open on the economic development authority, one on the park board, and two open on the police advisory committee.

Hannah Gilbert

Gilbert recently finished her sophomore year at Hopkins High School. Her family moved to Minnetonka two years ago from Highland Park, Illinois. She said things that are important to her are school and getting good grades, her family and friends. She plays volleyball and golf.

Callison asked why Gilbert was interested in serving on the police advisory committee. Gilbert said it sounded like the most interesting committee and she has an interest in how the legal process works.

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Wiersum said moving while in high school is a difficult thing. He asked her thoughts on Minnetonka and how it compares with her previous home. Gilbert responded it is a more relaxed and friendly place compared to Highland Park. She said it's less superficial here and more about the people.

Thomas pointed to a response in Gilbert's application that mentioned a "drug epidemic" in the schools. He asked for suggestions that are not being done now that might help deal with the problem. She said there should be more of a police presence in the schools.

Schneider pointed to another portion of Gilbert's application that said she has always been interested in politics. He asked what about politics interests her. She said politics affects people's lives and she finds it interesting.

Cameron French

French was originally born in Richfield, moved to Long Lake and has lived in Minnetonka for the past seven years. He loves the outdoors and goes canoeing in the BWCA (Camp Menogyn) every summer. He said that is why he chose the park board as his number one choice. He completed his junior year of high school and works at Target.

Schneider noted his interest in biological sciences and asked how that would apply to serving on the park board. French said he thought the board monitors the quality of water in the city. Schneider said that wasn't entirely correct but there is a strong natural resource element.

Callison asked if French had ever served on a committee with all adults. French said no, but at his work there are a lot of older people so he is used to that environment. Callison asked if there were particular things he does to help deal with that type of situation. French said he tries to be personable.

Wiersum asked French what he thought residents needed to do to be more protective of the environment. French said it was about giving a little more effort. He said Purgatory Park borders his backyard and the city has strengthened its policy on residents cleaning up after their dogs. Getting a message to people to keep the parks clean might be one approach. He said if residents want to maintain the city's natural resources everyone needs to do his/her part.

Thomas said the park board is looking at the city's dog leash ordinances and will be looking at the dog leash rules in the parks. He said that since French lives so close to Purgatory Park if he has had any bad experiences with dogs in the park. French said that a few years ago the police told his brother and him to put their dog on a leash. Also, his mother jogs through the park and has had issues with a

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person who has a massive dog. French said some dogs do fine while roaming free while others do need to be restrained.

Callison said that French indicated on his application an interest in serving on the police advisory committee and asked him to talk about his interest. French said like Gilbert he has seen drug and alcohol abuse at the high school. He said the problem is sad because some of the kids are well off and have had every advantage in life yet decide to use pot and alcohol. Ellingson asked if the activity is actually occurring at the school itself. French said yes, noting he has witnessed apparent drug use at the school and it is not a good experience to see that. Ellingson asked if the school officials were aware of the problem but were unable to keep up with it. French said searches are done but greater emphasis needs to be put on the punishment to send a message.

French asked how often the park board meets. Assistant City Manager GERALYN Barone said the board usually meets once a month and there is an occasional joint meeting with the Hopkins Park Board. Callison noted the youth position on the Park Board is non-voting unless a member of the board is absent. She said the youth representative has been a great asset to the board.

Wiersum said the police advisory committee is an advisory committee. He said French might find it interesting because the committee discusses the programs the police liaison officers run in the schools. The committee also looks at the different programs targeted at youth.

Schneider asked for clarification on what nights the various boards and commissions meet. Barone indicated the park board meets on Wednesday nights. Wiersum said the police advisory committee meets three or four times a year, usually on Thursday nights. There are other activities such as ride-alongs with police officers. Thomas said the economic development authority meets the second Tuesday of every month.

Tess Komarek

Komarek finished her sophomore year at Hopkins High School. She has lived in Minnetonka for ten years with her mom, dad, sister, and golden retriever, Bubba. Komarek plays basketball and soccer and volunteers through both sports teaching younger kids how to play. In her free time she plays sports, hangs out with friends and enjoys Shady Oak Park. This past year she took pre-calculus, advanced English, honors chemistry, and history. Her cumulative grade point average was 3.87. She said this year's classes were hard but pushed her to work harder and taught her that when she puts her mind to something it can be rewarding.

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Schneider asked how she would acclimate herself in an environment where she would be a student representative serving with adults. Komarek said as long as she could form a relationship with the adults it would not be a problem.

Thomas asked for an example of a good thing the city is doing in park management and something that could be improved upon. Komarek said the parks are well designated, well lit and the grass is well kept but when she is biking through some parts she sees a beer can which is disappointing. Callison asked if Komarek participated in the renewal process for the park. She said no.

Wiersum asked how Komarek became aware of the openings. She said her mother found the volunteer opportunities. For her the volunteer hours sparked an interest for college and being involved in something other than the volunteering she does for her sports activities. Callison asked if being a sophomore, Komarek was looking to serve for two years or for one. Komarek said she is interested in serving two years.

Komarek asked the council what they liked about serving on the council and what they disliked. Wiersum said it is a great group of people. Prior to getting elected, he didn't know that much about the city. He said Minnetonka is a great city and it is rewarding having the opportunity to learn more about what makes the city work, and getting to know a lot of residents. He said the part he doesn't like is sometimes the meetings go long. Schneider said there is a chance to work with a lot of different people and it is rewarding to help them solve problems. On the flip side working with a lot of people and helping them solve problems sometimes isn't a lot of fun. So it can be either challenging or rewarding. Allendorf said it is good to be able to weigh things and make decisions that keeps Minnetonka great or makes it better. He said if he wasn't on the council he would fear someone might be in his place that wouldn't make the right decisions. Wiersum said there are times when residents call and he doesn't agree with their position. But representing them he helps them make the best case for their position so they have the best chance to succeed. He said he finds this dynamic unique.

Ethan Lang

Lang is a junior at Hopkins High School and is interested in serving on the police advisory committee. He has served in student government at his junior and senior high schools. Next year he will be serving as secretary of the student government executive committee. Lang is also involved in the YMCA Youth in Government program. In that program he has chaired committees, run for office, and served as the South Korean United Nations ambassador. He sings in two choirs at the school. He also participated in the spring musical and is a swimmer. He said his most relative qualification is serving as a student representative on the Hopkins School Board. During his time with the board some of the issues discussed were creating financial stability for the district, closing Katherine

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Curren Elementary School, redistricting the elementary schools, and avoiding credit caps at the high school.

Gunyou indicated Lang might be interested in serving on the newly established community commission. The objective of the commission is to reach out and get more community involvement. Barone said the commission came out of the 50th Anniversary Committee whose membership consisted of community representatives from many different groups from the schools to nonprofits, to the faith community. Gunyou said one of the objectives is to find representatives of different ages and genders with different interests and backgrounds. Lang said he would be interested in serving on that commission.

Allendorf asked Lang with all his activities how he would find the time to serve on a board or commission. Lang said he would find the time and he already spends late nights reading the agendas for the school board meetings.

Ellingson asked if Lang had any ideas to address drug and alcohol abuse at the schools. Lang replied he agreed with the idea of increasing police presence and tougher punishment. He said it is a tough issue and it should be drilled into kids early on that drinking and taking drugs isn't the right or cool thing to do.

Schneider said the issue has been around for many years and the primary challenge comes from peer pressure with kids influencing other kids. He asked Lang how he sees changing that so the peer pressure is reversed. Lang said just saying don't take drugs or alcohol is not effective and it almost encourages kids to drink and take drugs as a matter of rebellion. Making kids see that it is not cool to drink or take drugs might work better.

Ellingson asked if there has been a drop off in the past year in the amount of kids from the Ridgedale YMCA participating in the Youth in Government program. Lang said yes there had been. He said in the past the program involved a lot of students from the Hopkins school district but in the past year there were efforts to branch out to Orono, Wayzata and Minnetonka more.

Ashley Mecum

Mecum said Jidana Park borders her backyard and she is really interested in environmental studies with particular interest in conservation. She is in choir and will enter her senior year next year. She has done a lot of volunteer work. Being a type one diabetic she has participated in many walks and runs for cures. She loves to watch environmental television programs. She is particularly interested in how to help make the world better with things like using hybrid cars. She likes to dance and draw in her free time.

Schneider said that in Mecum's application materials there was a statement that one of her goals is to change the community to be a more enjoyable and

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peaceful place. He asked her to talk about that goal. Mecum said one example is the dog on a leash issue and that her mom was knocked over and injured by a dog. She said dogs should be leashed especially on school property. She said another recent example was when her family was looking for parking in Como Park and had people yelling and shouting at them. She said routing people differently might create more parking.

Thomas said Mecum mentioned in her application she would like to see an expansion in summer programs. He asked her if she could think of things the city is not doing in its park programs that should be considered. Mecum said she would like to see a community picnic where people would get together and exchange ideas. She said one conservation idea came from an observation in school where if one piece of plastic shows up in the recycling bin the contents of the entire bin are thrown into the trash. She suggested providing designated bins for plastic and paper.

Wiersum said he was intrigued by Mecum's strong interest in environmental issues. He said the city council and boards and commissions constantly have to weigh individual rights with the common good. He said the city works hard on managing the environment. He asked what more could be done so the city and its residents are more environmentally conscious. Mecum said she sees beer cans float down the river in Jidana Park. She said it would be worthwhile to include pictures of things like this in the city's pamphlets to show people that these things happen in the community and people can step up to keep the community clean. She suggested getting groups out in the parks to help clean up litter.

Callison asked how Mecum heard about the openings. Mecum said she found materials in her school.

Robbie Rosenthal

Rosenthal is a senior at Hopkins High School. He was born and raised in Minnetonka so when he saw the openings he thought it would be a great opportunity to get more involved in the community. He has served on the student government both in junior and senior high as vice president, president, and treasurer. He is also involved in the YMCA Youth in Government program. He ran for governor and lost but was appointed chief of staff to the current governor. Two years ago he was voted cabinet member of the year. He is the current president of his synagogue's youth group. He was also appointed to the JCRC's teen coalition. Rosenthal said Camp Menogyn and Camp Warren have been a big part of his life. He has been going since age six and has canoed and backpacked in Yellowstone. He was named all conference in golf this past year and was named team captain.

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Callison noted Rosenthal's first interest was serving on the economic development authority. Rosenthal said that stood out when he was applying but he is open to any way he could serve and make a difference in the city.

Allendorf asked how Rosenthal familiarized himself with the economic development authority, park board and police advisory committee. Rosenthal said he talked with his teachers and other residents but didn't find a lot of information. He said by participating he could learn what is going on.

Wiersum said Rosenthal has done a lot of things and has an impressive background. He asked Rosenthal of the many things he has done what the best experience was and why. Rosenthal said from a personal standpoint Camp Menogyn and the Yellowstone trip stands out because there were days where his group woke up at 5 a.m. and didn't get to camp until 8 p.m. He said it was a great experience as far as pushing himself and being able to say, "look what I did." Also, looking behind him and not being able to see where he started from created a sense of self accomplishment. He said as far as his political background his work with a youth group and being named top lobbyist allowed him to go to Washington, D.C. and speak with U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar and U.S. Representative Jim Ramstad as well as speak on issues he is passionate about.

Callison asked what issues he feels passionate about. Rosenthal identified AIDs problems, Dalfour, poverty and healthcare issues.

Gauri Subramani

Subramani is a senior at Hopkins High School. She moved to Minnesota when she was six years old and has lived in Minnetonka all that time. She has been on the varsity debate team for three years and will serve as captain next year. She said the team has been successful both at the state and national levels. She is also involved in an anti-racist group at school called Dare to Be Real. She said the group started this past year and talked about racial issues with sophomores at the high school and also grade school students. This coming year she will be the leader of the group and will focus on activities with junior high students. She said a lot of times that race and social issues are often ignored in society. She is interning at the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, a nonprofit group that works with immigration issues, women's issues and education. Last year she worked in the immigrant issues program and worked at a Minnesota State Fair booth. This year she worked in the women's issues program creating a workshop for International Women's Day, a statewide convention at the University of Minnesota featuring workshops and panels on various issues. Her workshop involved teenage girls' issues focusing on the impact of the media on teenagers. She said the workshop looked at the type of images the media projects and tried to go beyond the health class discussions which basically say objectification is bad. The workshop instead focused on the disconnect between objecting women to an ideal standard and at the same time having everyone still subscribe

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to the ideal. The discussion involved how to make the message make sense that girls don't have to look like the media ideal. This summer Subramani is working at the University of Minnesota Psychology Department on a project that is examining the role of emotions in politics.

Allendorf said often there is a trigger like the encouragement from a certain teacher that leads to a person getting involved. He asked Subramani what got her involved in debate. She said she admired her older sister who was involved in debate and thought it was a valuable activity. At first she said unlike her sister she wasn't that interested because it conflicted with the tennis season, but then she realized she wasn't really good at tennis so she began to love debate.

Thomas said that of all the applicants Subramani was the only one who mentioned eminent domain. He asked her opinion on the eminent domain that occurred as part of the Glen Lake development project. She said the sentiment in her neighborhood was the project was destroying the neighborhood and it was unfortunate the community at large doesn't approve of the project. She said she needed more information to make an educated statement about it but she thought it was sad some small businesses were being destroyed and the feel of the neighborhood was being changed from a small residential area to a more populous area including condos.

Wiersum asked what some of the topics have been during Subramani's time on the debate team and asked her to name the most interesting topic. She said this past year's topic was a just government ought to provide health care for its citizens. She said the nice thing about debate is not knowing much about a topic and becoming immersed in all the literature to be found on the topic. She said her favorite topic was a victim of repeated domestic violence having the right to use deliberate deadly force against her/his attacker. She said it was the type of topic that doesn't get discussed publicly. She said a lot of times debaters feel removed from the topic because they deal with abstract concepts but domestic violence is an issue some people have had an experience with. She thus found the topic interesting because it forced the debaters to confront a real world issue in a sensitive manner. She said the latest debate topic was corporations ought to be held to the same moral standards as individuals.

Schneider noted Subramani indicated her top interest was serving on the economic development authority. He said the authority deals with affordable housing issues. He asked her to expand on her interest in that area. She said she was interested in the area due in part to her involvement with Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights and seeing the unfortunate situations some immigrants find themselves in.

Ellingson asked Subramani's opinion on how different ethnic groups at the high school get along. She said participating in Dare to Be Real she was forced to

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look at the unacknowledged tension that exists. She said kids say that Hopkins is accepting and diverse but at the central gathering place of the high school the students are racially segregated. She said students say that is due to who they are friends with without accepting that issues exist and they might have a role in perpetuating the problems.

Schneider made the general comment that if the applicants were a sign of the youth coming up he was very comfortable in his old age.

3. Adjournment

The study session adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David E. Maeda
City Clerk