

**MINUTES OF THE
MINNETONKA PARK BOARD
January 8, 2003**

1. Roll Call

Park Board Members Paul Lehman, Bob McFarlin, Lanise Stuftt, and Sue Woodrich were present. Attending staff was GERALYN BARONE, Dave Johnson, Craig Sinclair and Perry Vetter. Vice-chair Lehman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

McFarlin moved and Woodrich seconded a motion to approve the Minutes of December 18, 2002 as submitted. Lehman, McFarlin, Stuftt, and Woodrich voted "Yes". Motion carried.

3. Business Items

A. Appointment of Park Board Chair and Vice Chair

Citing the absence of three Board members, McFarlin moved and Woodrich seconded a motion to postpone the appointments of the Chair and Vice-Chair positions until the February 5, 2003 meeting as permitted by the City's ordinance. Lehman, McFarlin, Stuftt, and Woodrich voted "Yes". Motion carried.

B. Second review of the Comprehensive Athletic Field Use Policy

Johnson introduced the item and reported on recommended changes made at the informational meeting conducted prior to the Park Board meeting. He noted that approximately 15 community organization representatives attended the meeting.

Lehman reviewed each requested change and asked for Park Board feedback.

Considering requests to extend the seasons of use on the Big Willow Little League baseball and softball fields, Lehman asked staff what the implications of a longer season would be. Sinclair indicated that extended play would be contingent upon weather conditions, field conditions, and any required post-season field maintenance. McFarlin asked when post-season maintenance plans were developed. Sinclair responded that needs are usually apparent by late July. Woodrich asked what impact an extended season would have on facilities at Big Willow. Sinclair indicated that the restroom facilities might need to be shut down if the freezing of water is a possibility.

Lehman requested that staff revise the language for Big Willow baseball and softball fields to read that field availability from September 1–October 15 will be contingent upon weather, field and maintenance conditions, and will be made available for use by August 1 of each year.

In discussing a request to extend the season of use for fields at Guillian Park, Johnson reminded the Park Board that the existing Guillian Park Operating Policy prohibits use of the softball fields from September 1 - April 1. Johnson added that

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the Committee that developed the policy included two residents who would be strongly opposed to any extension of the season on the two softball fields.

John Clark representing Hopkins Sports (Girl's Softball) requested that the field availability be extended until mid-September and asked how this change could be approved. Johnson responded that it would require a change to existing City Council policy and suggested that the request be made separate from consideration of the Comprehensive Field Policy so that neighbors to the park can be informed of the request. The Park Board agreed and decided not to amend the policy to extend the season for field use at Guillian Park.

Lehman reviewed a request by John Clark to provide use of the adult softball fields at Big Willow Park for youth.

Johnson explained that the adult softball program provided by the City generates revenues of approximately \$20,000 over the cost of the program and that these funds help to offset the cost of youth programs such as the summer playground program that do not require a fee. He added that any loss of use on the Big Willow Park softball fields would greatly impact the ability of the adult softball fields to generate revenues the Recreation Services Department depends on. Johnson suggested that the Joint Recreation Board review budget impacts when the 2004 budget is reviewed in July of 2003.

Stufft supported adult priority use of the Big Willow softball fields and noted that she was not opposed of youth use as a second priority.

Woodrich voiced concern for the loss of any program revenue for adult softball. Staff was directed to explore options for youth use of the adult softball fields at Big Willow Park as a second priority to adult use.

The Park Board then reviewed a request to consider reserving informal play fields to interested organizations. Johnson explained that 16 informal fields exist throughout the City and that staff practice has been to make these fields available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Johnson added that this practice had been maintained to provide the areas for informal neighborhood use. Stufft supported the non-scheduling policy for the informal fields. McFarlin also supported a no-scheduling policy, but indicated that staff should consider a scheduling policy if in the future it would eliminate problems that may occur over competition for the space.

Lehman directed staff to incorporate the changes to the Comprehensive Field Policy as recommended by the Park Board, and bring the policy back for final review at the February 5, 2003 meeting.

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C. Civic Center Master Plan Review

Barone introduced the item and noted that the last Civic Center Master Plan was developed in 1985. She added that several projects are scheduled for the Civic Center in the near future noting the addition of two wells for the City's water system and the construction of a communications tower.

Jeff Schoenbauer of Brauer & Associates, Ltd. Introduced himself as the project consultant for the Civic Center master plan process. He noted that the intent of the new master plan is to designate use patterns and potential projects for the site, adding that the result will not include specific plans for future development as the 1985 plan did. Schoenbauer indicated that he has met with City staff and Council Members to gain their input, and still plans to meet with other potential stakeholders such as the Timberhill neighborhood and Senior Advisory board. Schoenbauer requested Park Board member input regarding their vision for use of the Civic Center campus.

McFarlin questioned where funding for improvements to the site would come from. Barone indicated that until a plan is established, funding requirements will not be known. She added that possible sources could include the Community Investment Fund in approximately five years. McFarlin asked if a future referendum was a possibility. Barone acknowledged that a referendum was a possibility but had not yet been considered.

McFarlin noted that his questioning about funding were related to a concern that an elaborate plan not be developed that could never be accomplished due to a lack of funding. Barone indicated that the request of Brauer & Associates, Ltd. was to help develop a general plan for the Civic Center that did not include specific projects.

McFarlin asked if the site had any amenities that were restricted from the planning process such as the horse arena or canine training areas. Barone noted that fixed facilities such as the ice arena and City Hall complex were in place. She added that options for a communications tower and Xcel Energy sub-station are under consideration. At this time, Lehman acknowledged that he was an employee of Xcel Energy and would excuse himself from any discussion related to Xcel.

Woodrich asked about the future of the Williston Fitness Center and the possibility of conducting a feasibility study. She indicated a preference for aquatic space over health and fitness space. Johnson indicated that staff has developed several options for the City Manager's review regarding the future of the Williston Fitness Center and will review these options in conjunction with the CIP budget process.

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Barone invited Park Board member perspective regarding the intent of the Civic Center campus, more specifically if it should be a community gathering location. McFarlin responded that his preference was for the provision of needed facilities and amenities verses a town square purpose. He added that the existing demand for facilities in the community outweighs the need for community gathering space. Stuftt agreed with McFarlin and added a desire for improved trail amenities on the campus. McFarlin added that any improved trail access would make the campus a more desirable location for a skateboard facility.

Woodrich suggested that the master plan include a recommendation to tie amenities on the campus together. Barone noted that traffic patterns to the campus and within the campus will be studied as part of the master plan process.

McFarlin questioned if the Summer Festival needed to be on the Civic Center campus verses another location within the park system. Vetter responded that other locations may provide adequate space but lack the indoor facilities needed for the event.

Barone asked if a natural feel to the site was of importance to the Park Board. McFarlin indicated it was, however added that natural plantings don't always enhance the look of a site.

Schoenbauer reviewed further steps in the master plan process. He noted that additional meetings with residents, the Senior Advisory Board and City staff remain, adding that once developed, the plan will be brought back to the Park Board for review.

D. 2003 Park Board Goals, Objectives and Action Step Planning

Johnson reviewed the goals and objectives developed by the Park Board at the November 20, 2002 meeting. The Board made no changes to the draft.

Johnson indicated that the strategic plan will be completed with the review of action steps for 2003 at the February 5 meeting.

4. Park Board Member Reports

None were provided.

5. Information Items

There were no additions to the items included in the Park Board's packet.

6. Upcoming Park Board agenda items

Johnson noted that a second review of the Comprehensive Athletic Field Use Policy will be added to the February 5, 2003 agenda along with a possible review of the Hilloway and Libbs Lake Park reviews.

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7. Adjournment

McFarlin moved and Stufft seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 p.m. Lehman, McFarlin, Stufft, and Woodrich voted "Yes". Motion carried.