

**MINUTES OF THE
MINNETONKA PARK BOARD
February 5, 2003**

1. Roll Call

Park Board Members Jim Calkins (7:20 p.m.) Paul Lehman, Lanise Stufft, Steve Watkins and Sue Woodrich were present. Attending staff was Geralyn Barone, Dean Elstad, Dave Johnson, Craig Sinclair, Mark Simonsen and Perry Vetter. Chair Watkins called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

Lehman noted a correction in the spelling of Xcel Energy on page 3 of the minutes. With that correction, Lehman moved and Stufft seconded a motion to approve the Minutes of December 18, 2002 as submitted. Lehman, Watkins, Stufft, and Woodrich voted "Yes". Motion carried.

3. Business Items

A. Park Renewal Plan review- Hilloway Park

Note: Chair Watkins took this item out of turn to allow time for arrival of Park Board members not yet in attendance.

Vetter provided an overview of the Hilloway Park Renewal Project. He noted that two neighborhood meetings had been held on November 26, 2002 and December 17, 2002. Vetter added that prior to the neighborhood meetings, 43 surveys were completed by residents residing near the park.

Vetter summarized significant "immediate" improvement recommendations including improvements to the southern trail segment, the addition of an eastern trail spur and the addition of a natural resources management kiosk. Vetter then summarized "long-term" improvement recommendation including the addition of seating areas and interpretive signs, and considerable natural resource management. Recommended management included the removal of invasive species, enhancement of the understory, and restoration of the hardwood, prairie and wetland ecosystems.

Vetter introduced Peter MacDonagh from the Kestrel Design Group. Mr. MacDonagh provided a history of the park dating back to 1946. In summary, MacDonagh explained that Hilloway Park provided a unique blend of hardwood, prairie and wetland areas, and noted that white pines found in the park are not native to this part of Minnesota.

MacDonagh summarized the surveys and input received from residents at the neighborhood meetings as strongly indicating a desire to keep Hilloway Park in a natural setting with no additions of active recreational amenities.

MacDonagh reviewed recommendations for natural resources management of defined coniferous, deciduous and prairie biomes. He noted that management tools

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could include managed burns, chemical applications and physical removals of invasive species.

Watkins opened the floor to Park Board questions.

Woodrich asked about plans for upgrading the existing trail, noting areas that have degraded. MacDonagh responded that areas of the southern trail will be stabilized and other portions of the trail resurfaced. MacDonagh indicated that all problem areas will be addressed.

Calkins questioned why American Hazel was not considered to be an invasive species while Prickly Ash was. Calkins noted that while he agrees that Prickly Ash should be removed from some areas of the Park, it could remain in other areas.

Watkins opened the floor to public comments.

Bob Sherman, 2231 Pine Island Road, indicated that he lived next to Hilloway Park and was speaking for other residents who could not attend the meeting. Sherman praised Perry Vetter and the staff for work completed on the plan to date, but indicated that he had concerns related to the natural resources management plan the City utilizes. Sherman noted that 73% of those completing a survey regarding improvements to Hilloway Park, indicated that they wanted to keep the natural feel the park has. He questioned why oak trees are not found in Lone Lake and Big Willow Park where restoration is underway, adding that new buckthorn growth has also reappeared. Sherman went on to question the project's time line and concern that the allocated budget was inadequate. Sherman closed by suggesting the use of volunteers such as Boy Scouts and school districts students, and noted that he had contracted with Ecological Strategies (E.S.) to provide a second opinion with regards to natural resource management.

Barone noted that staff had met with two representatives of E.S. earlier in the week to discuss and review their concerns.

Gwen Myers, 12009 West Hilloway Road, indicated that she had completed a survey, attended both neighborhood meetings, and was comfortable with the plan presented. Myers asked that she wants to see all buckthorn removed and encouraged volunteers to assist where possible. Myers closed by indicating that she has been impressed by the process used by the City to date.

Stan Walker, 2441 Byrnes Road, noted that he spends considerable time in the park and is very concerned about the amount of buckthorn growth. He expressed his desire to have both immediate and long-term plans in place to address the removal of invasive species.

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Dr. Cynthia Lane, Minneapolis resident and representative of E.S., indicated that she was confident in the concept plan but concerned about the implementation plan. She noted that without details, the implementation plan was impossible to judge. Lane added that if not done correctly, an implementation plan can cause damage.

Hearing no other requests, Watkins closed the floor to public comments.

Watkins summarized that he heard strong support for the concept plan of keeping the park in a natural setting, but heard differing views on how natural resource management should be implemented.

Watkins requested that the City Forester, Mark Simenson, provide an overview.

Simenson noted that all consultants have excellent ideas that deserve consideration. He noted that long-term plans to control invasive species will be put in place. As for Big Willow Park, Simenson acknowledged that some re-growth of buckthorn had occurred due to an inability to burn in the fall of 2002 due to situations beyond the City's control. Simenson added that in response to Mr. Sherman's observations, no Oak or Jack Pines were removed from Lone Lake, and only two dead trees were removed from Big Willow. Simenson encouraged the use of volunteers, noting that in all cases, use of volunteers must be managed. He added that buckthorn removal can cost \$2,000-\$5,000 an acre.

With respect to implementation plans, Simenson indicated a preference for an "adaptive management" technique that has been successful on other city properties. Simenson stressed that evaluation and re-evaluations need to take place in the field as part of an on-going process for each park.

Watkins suggested that those in attendance should visit test plots in Lone Lake if they have not done so. He noted that the City entered the natural resources management process cautiously, developed and observed test plots and is committed to a long-term plan for each area restored. He added that to date, staff's "adaptive management" approach has been successful.

Barone closed by noting that the Park Board is being asked to approve the concept plan for Hilloway Park, noting that greater detail will be available as construction documents are developed. She reminded the Park Board that throughout this process, public involvement is important.

Watkins noted that funding for long-term restoration efforts is included as part of the City's annual budget. Watkins added that referendum dollars can be spent to establish a park but not for continued maintenance.

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Stufft questioned how far the \$100,000 estimated budget for natural resources management would go in Hilloway Park at \$2,000-\$5,000 an acre. Simenson noted that although the park consists of 33 acres, not all areas are infested with buckthorn.

Watkins requested Park Board and public access to the Power Point presentation used by MacDonagh. Vetter indicated that he would add the presentation to the Parks Renewal website.

Noting that the concept plan was well reasoned, Lehman moved and Calkins seconded the motion to approve the concept plan for Hilloway Park and forward the plan to the City Council for consideration. Calkins noted that he was confident with staff's implementation plan. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

B. Appointment of Park Board Chair and Vice Chair

Watkins opened by indicating that changes and demands in his personal life have caused him concern about continuing his responsibilities as Park Board Chair. He added that with only one year remaining in his term limit, this might be a good time to transition to a new chair.

Stufft moved and Woodrich seconded a motion to appoint Paul Lehman as Park Board Chair for the term ending January 31, 2004. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

Calkins moved and Woodrich seconded a motion to appoint Steve Watkins as Park Board Vice-Chair for the term ending January 31, 2004. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

C. Consideration of the Comprehensive Athletic Field Use Policy

Johnson provided a summary of changes that were requested by the Park Board at the January 8, 2003, meeting.

Mark Broin, representing the Hopkins Dynamo program, spoke in favor of the policy. He informed the Park Board that practice space for youth soccer continues to be limited. Sinclair informed Broin that he was scheduled to meet with the Tonka United programs to discuss the use of informal play fields as non-reservable practice locations. Sinclair welcomed the Hopkins Dynamo program to participate in the meeting.

Calkins requested that sportsmanship be emphasized either in the policy or by other means. Johnson noted that agreements prepared through the City's Legal Department for use of City fields, includes sportsmanship expectations. Lehman added that staff would be polling organizations to determine to what extent coaches are trained regarding sportsmanship. He noted that page 15 of the policy also address training expectations for coaches and parents in the areas of values and ethics.

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Broin added that the Hopkins Dynamo program conducts ethics training to coaches and would be open to assisting the City in this process. Broin indicated that he was pleased to hear the City's concern over issues related to sportsmanship, noting that other organizations have not made this area a priority.

Stufft moved and Calkins seconded a motion to approve the Comprehensive Athletic Field Use Policy and forward the policy to the City Council for consideration.

D. Review of 2004-2008 Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Vetter provided an overview of the information included in the staff report. Vetter noted new projects added to the 2004-2008 CIP including a new warminghouse at Gatewood School (2008), MMSE Skatepark (2007), funding for the conversion of open space acquisitions, renovation of the Shady Oak Beach diving dock (2006), and 2008 trail segments.

Lehman questioned why the MMSE Skatepark was scheduled for 2007. Vetter noted that prior to determining a 2002 fund balance for the Park Fund, 2007 was the first year the project could be funded. Vetter added that a positive 2002 fund balance now allows the project to be moved to any year the Park Board recommends.

Woodrich supported moving the MMSE skate park up and asked staff for a reasonable timeline. Johnson noted that an agreement with the Minnetonka School District could be negotiated in 2003 making construction in 2004 a strong possibility.

Watkins supported moving the skate park project to 2004. Lehman added that other projects may be planned for the skate park site if the project is not confirmed.

Woodrich asked if future planning for Williston Center improvements needed to be included in the 2004-2008 plans. Johnson responded that staff is in the process of preparing options for Park Board and Council review. He added that any direction taken would require a minimum of two years' planning which would allow the project to be included in next year's CIP if needed.

Stufft noted that the CIP includes funding for paving of the Meadow Park ice rink and questioned if this was in addition to funding presented previously to the Park Board. Sinclair responded that the CIP funds were included in park renewal funding previously reviewed by the Park Board.

Calkins inquired about the status of the Civic Center to Jidana Park trail link. Elstad informed the Board that the Council approved this trail segment in 2002

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with construction planned for 2003. Lehman expressed a desire to see the plans developed for the trail.

Johnson noted that the Park Board's 2003 Strategic Plan includes an Action Step to consider athletic field funding in the 2004-2008 CIP. Lehman asked if any further discussions with the Minnetonka School District (MSD) have taken place. Vetter responded that it is up to MSD to present a plan to the City if interested in jointly developing fields. Vetter added that the Hopkins School District has expressed a similar desire to jointly improve fields on school district property.

Stufft reminded the Board that use of Civic Center property for interim field use was previously discussed.

Woodrich recommended adding funding in the amount of \$45,000 in either 2007 or 2008.

Woodrich moved and Watkins seconded a motion to recommend the 2004-2008 to Council with two changes to the plan presented by staff. Changes include allocating funding in the amount of \$85,000 for the MMSE skate plaza in 2004, and adding \$45,000 for athletic field funding in 2008. All voted "yes". Motion carried.

E. Consideration of 2003 Park Board Action Steps

The Park Board provided no additional changes to the Strategic Plan Action Steps developed at the January 8, 2003 meeting. Citing the use of the action steps a working document, no formal action was taken.

4. Park Board Member Reports

None were provided.

5. Information Items

Vetter reported that initial indications are that the bids received for Ford, Victoria-Evergreen and Orchard Parks were favorable. No other items were added to the information provided in the meeting packet.

6. Upcoming Park Board agenda items

No changes to the Park Board's 6-month calendar were made.

7. Adjournment

Calkins moved and Watkins seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 p.m. All voted "yes". Motion carried.