

**MINUTES OF THE
MINNETONKA PARK BOARD
March 3, 2004**

1. Roll Call

Park Board Members Jim Calkins, Andrea Fiterman, Bruce Gefvert, Tim Goodyear, Paul Lehman, Freinde Mills and Sue Woodrich were present. Attending staff were Geralyn Barone, Dave Johnson, Julie Opshal and Perry Vetter.

Chair Lehman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Lehman welcomed new board member Goodyear to the park board.

2. Approval of Minutes

Gefvert moved and Mills seconded a motion to approve the Minutes of February 4, 2004 as submitted. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

3. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

No requests were made.

4. Business Items

A. 2004 Athletic Field Needs Study

Johnson introduced the item, noting that an initial study was prepared in 1989 by the Hoisington Group and indicated a community-wide shortage of athletic fields for softball, soccer, and all ages of baseball. Johnson informed the board that no corrective measures were taken to address the shortage of fields, however 40 acres of parkland were purchased for fields adjacent to Lone Lake Park. Johnson went on to say that staff updated the study in 1995 and, based on the findings that field shortages still existed, the park board approved a plan for five projects to increase the quality and quantity of fields provided by the city. Since 2000, Johnson indicated that no additional field related projects have occurred. Johnson closed by noting that the park board requested a second update of the initial plan which staff has now completed.

Vetter presented the field needs study in a Power Point presentation. He noted that the presentation was categorized by demand, current athletic facilities, need, and opportunities. Vetter opened the presentation with a summary of the conclusions and recommendations, noting that the City required seven regulation baseball fields, five soccer/lacrosse fields, six football/rugby fields and 10 softball fields to meet existing demands.

Vetter then provided the following information.

Demand

- City populations in the age group 0-19 are expected to decrease from 13,320 in 2002 to 12,520 in 2010. This represents a 6.1% decline.
- School district projections for Districts' 270 and 276 are projected to decline 1.1% from 2003 to 2008.

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- Comparing 1989 participation to 2003 participation, Vetter noted the following trends:
 - Little League baseball - Increased 15.6%
 - Youth regulation baseball – Increased 98.8%
 - Intermediate baseball – Increased 27.7%
 - Adult baseball – Increased 2.5%
 - Youth softball – Declined 17.9%
 - Youth football – Increased 632%(not all organizations reported in 1989)
 - Adult football – Declined 50.8%
 - Youth soccer – Increased 105%
 - Adult soccer – Declined 7.4%
 - Lacrosse – Increased from 0 in 1989 to 431 in 2003

Johnson noted that total participation in all field related activities surveyed increased 2.6% from 1989 to 2003.

Current Athletic Facilities

Vetter provided pie charts illustrating community fields provided by sport, and the percentage provided by the City of Minnetonka, City of Hopkins, combined school districts, and private organizations. Of the 78 total fields maintained, Vetter noted that the City was responsible for 21 or 26.9% of the total.

Need

Vetter provided data comparing the availability of fields in Minnetonka to those available in Edina, Eden Prairie, Burnsville and Plymouth. Vetter also presented information regarding national standards for field provisions.

Vetter reviewed projects the City has participated in since 1995 totaling \$506,000 in contributions from the City. These projects included a partnership with the Hopkins School District for fields at Hopkins West Junior High; Bennett Park upgrades; Guillian Park development; the addition of lights to two little league fields at Big Willow Park; and the conversion of fields at Lone Lake Park to dedicated soccer use.

Opportunity

Vetter provided an inventory of existing park locations used for athletic field use. Staff identified two locations as potential for expansion, Lone Lake and Civic Center parks. As proposed by staff, three practice and one regulation game field could be added if the two locations were upgraded.

Johnson reviewed four staff recommendations for expanding athletic fields within the City. Recommendations included converting the Civic Center space, now allocated to a horse arena to soccer; lighting two fields (one new field) at Lone

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Lake Park; exploring continued partnerships with the Hopkins School District for upgrading softball and baseball fields; and exploring the possibility of replacing the natural turf on the Big Willow Park soccer field with artificial turf.

Lehman opened the floor to park board member questions.

Gefvert asked why outdoor hockey rinks were not included in the study. Johnson responded that the study related to athletic field use and followed the same criteria of information used in the initial study. Johnson added that requests for use of outdoor hockey space have not exceeded the supply of rinks available.

Fiterman asked about volleyball needs. Vetter responded that as with hockey, volleyball courts are not considered an athletic field. Vetter indicated that outdoor courts currently available within the parks seem adequate to meet existing needs. Johnson added that requests for youth volleyball space that he has received all apply to indoor space.

Fiterman questioned why there was not a pie chart prepared for football. Johnson responded that one could be added to the report, but in most cases the fields are the same ones used for soccer. Johnson added that the school districts provide fields used for football.

Lehman noted that national standards included the survey of southern states where outdoor activities such as softball and football are more widely played.

Calkins asked for clarification regarding the decline in adult softball participation, and questioned how fields previously used for adult softball are now used. Johnson replied that in many cases the quality of fields available to play detracted from the amount of adults interested in paying the fees required to play. Johnson added that in these cases, the fields are now utilized for youth purposes and are included in the field inventory previously reviewed by the park board. Vetter added that many adults who played on multiple nights in past years may have cut back their amount of play.

Calkins added that he did not pay particular attention to national standards or comparisons to other cities.

Hearing no further Park Board comments, Lehman opened the floor to public comments or questions.

Todd Essik, 1820 Fairfield Road, spoke on behalf of the MRSLS adult soccer league and informed the park board that his association is unable to schedule any fields for use in the City of Minnetonka due to the shortage of fields.

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Mark Magnuson, 5289 Dominick Drive spoke as a representative of the Hopkins Dynamo youth soccer program and informed the Board that his organization is considerably short of field space, especially in the area of practices.

Kevin Kelly (no address provided) spoke on behalf of Tonka United Soccer and the MRSL and confirmed that fields are in short supply for both organizations.

Tim Moynahan (no address provided) spoke representing the Hopkins Sports Girl's Softball Organization. Moynahan questioned the information provided indicating that 26 softball fields were available with the community, noting that his organization has lost seven fields for the upcoming season due to construction in the Hopkins School District. Moynahan requested park board consideration with respect to gender equity in the provision of fields. He also requested that the City work with the Hopkins School District to light more existing fields and improve maintenance, indicating that West Junior High was a possible location to add lights.

Todd Kasowski, Big Willow Park Maintenance Manager, described in detail the amount of overuse the soccer field at Big Willow Park receives. Johnson added that to maintain quality playing conditions, turf experts recommend 50-60 games be played on a field annually. As an example of overuse, Johnson informed the park board that 310 games were played on the Big Willow soccer field in 2003.

Mills asked what the cost to convert the soccer field at Lone Lake Park would be. Kasowski indicated that the cost to provide turf alone would be in the \$300,000 range, not including and sub-surface preparation, drainage, or other required work.

Hearing no further requests from the public, Lehman closed the floor to public comments.

Calkins indicated that he still felt the question of demand vs. need had not been answered. He added that the park board and City Council had not determined priorities as they relate to field development. Calkins indicated support for partnerships but noted that the addition of a domed turf area only invites other uses and does not address demand. Calkins closed by noting that while the 1989 participation comparisons to 2003 show a slight increase in participation, the numbers do not provide a clear picture of what actually occurred during that period of time.

With respect to a motion, Calkins noted that he was not opposed to converting the horse arena area to athletic field use if future needs dictate, however he could not support a motion at this time for the conversion based on direction taken at the February Park Board meeting.

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Woodrich indicated that she would like to see the horse arena conversion included in the park board's motion to recommend steps to explore for future expansion of athletic fields.

Johnson noted that the recommendations presented by staff are not intended to be specific in nature. He added that based on the four recommendations developed by staff, several options could be developed for further park board consideration.

Barone noted that while the park board recommended leaving the horse arena as an amenity on the Civic Center campus, staff recommends to council a conversion of the arena use to soccer. Calkins voiced his concerns that the park board stand by their previous recommendation and let the council determine the ultimate use for the property. Woodrich indicated that she would approve such a motion only if the board agreed to look at alternative use of the property if the council does not follow the park board's recommendation. The park board generally concurred with Woodrich.

Calkins moved and Fiterman seconded a motion to support staff recommendations #2, #3 and #4 developed by staff for exploring future options for the provision of athletic field space, with an amendment to recommendation #3 to read "school districts", and to address recommendation #3 if so directed by the City Council following their March 15 review of the Civic Center master plan. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

5. Park Board Member Reports

Mills reported that she visited Edinborough Park in Edina and was impressed with the recreational opportunities available.

6. Information Items

Johnson provided budget related information on the Public Works Department's budget pertaining to portable restrooms located in city parks. Johnson indicated that the information provided should be considered by the board as they review park renewal requests for expanded availability of portable restrooms.

Barone updated the board regarding the City's 1st annual Eco-Fair scheduled for Saturday, March 13.

Calkins requested updates on the Crosby Road development project and park maintenance renewal budgets.

Calkins complimented staff on the completion of the Cullen-Smith property agreement.

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7. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

Lehman requested that all council meetings that include park board recommendations for discussion be included on the upcoming meeting schedule.

8. Adjournment

Gefvert moved and Calkins seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:53 p.m. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.