

**MINUTES OF THE  
MINNETONKA PARK BOARD  
April 7, 2004**

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**1. Roll Call**

Park Board Members Jim Calkins, Andrea Fiterman, Bruce Gefvert, Tim Goodyear, Freinde Mills and Sue Woodrich were present. Attending staff was GERALYN BARONE, Dean Elstad, Dave Johnson, Julie Opshal and Perry Vetter.

Vice-Chair Calkins called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Calkins noted two typos and Mills requested amount to install artificial turf on the Big Willow soccer field be provided in the text regarding the field needs discussion.

Gefvert moved and Mills seconded a motion to approve the Minutes as amended. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

**3. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda**

Eric Furlich, 14616 Waters Edge Drive, introduced himself as a member of Scout Troop 346 and in need of completing an Eagle Scout project. He added that he has spoken to Craig Sinclair in Public Works regarding his proposed project to make improvements at Glen Lake Park. Furlich described the project, including work to be done to control erosion between fields 1 & 2, and the installation of wood chips under the bleachers for field #2.

Calkins asked for any park board member questions.

Woodrich asked about the project's timeline. Furlich responded that the work would be done, if possible, prior to the start of the season. He added that if this was not possible, it could be delayed until Mother's Day when no games are played or post-season. Woodrich cautioned that enough time be allocated.

Gefvert asked how the project was selected. Furlich responded that he worked maintenance on the fields in past year and also played in the Mighty Mites organization. As a result of his maintenance duties, he observed the need for the work to be done.

Gefvert asked what type of fencing would be used to divert traffic. Furlich indicated it would be a wooden split-rail fence.

Woodrich asked about material costs and how they would be paid. Furlich indicated that funding of the project was still under review.

Johnson noted that Craig Sinclair of Public Works has talked with Eric regarding this project and approved the work proposed.

Calkins thanked Furlich for his pending volunteer work and wished him well.

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**4. Business Items**

**A-1. Review of Junction Park Master Plan**

Opshal introduced the item and provided an overview of the process to date. She noted that two neighborhood meetings were held, the first on February 10, 2004, with 12 residents in attendance, the second on March 2, 2004, with seven in attendance. Opshal added that 60 residents returned the initial survey sent out.

Opshal reviewed the target areas identified for improvements to the park including:

- Improving playground visibility
- Upgrading existing basketball and tennis courts
- Adding security lighting
- Replacement of stairs and railing
- Removal of the parking area

Opshal informed the board that as a result of these target areas, two concept plans (A & B) were developed and reviewed at the March 2, 2004, neighborhood meeting. Opshal then reviewed the Master Plan for Junction that was developed as a result of the review. She noted the elimination of the Excelsior Avenue parking lot, improved parking in the lot on the north side along Junction Road, vegetation improvements (selective screening and planting), new play areas, development of a loop-trail, ½ basketball court, two tennis courts, replacement of the northwest stairs and railing, drainage improvements throughout the park, and an open green space for informal use.

Calkins opened the discussion to park board member comments.

Woodrich asked if the wooden stairs off Excelsior Boulevard would remain if the parking lot were eliminated. Opshal responded that they would not, and that a trail would now connect.

Woodrich questioned if neighborhood concerns related to visibility were resolved. Opshal indicated they were.

Calkins noted that several surveys responded with requests for added buffers and asked how this was incorporated into the plan. Vetter noted added buffers in the northwest corner, near the north parking area, and along Excelsior Boulevard.

Calkins noted that interpretive signage received a 100% favorable response in the surveys returned and asked if this was incorporated into the plan. Vetter responded that residents attending the meeting had not requested interpretive

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signage. Vetter added that some residents might have mistaken this as regulation signage.

Calkins asked if the watershed district been notified about the need for improvements to the existing pond. Vetter responded that they had, and they are interested in making improvements.

Goodyear asked if tennis backboards were ever requested on the courts. Vetter responded that they were not requested but are available in other parks.

Calkins opened the floor to public comments.

Frank Kurth, 12511 Briarwood Court, indicated that he used Junction Park 3-4 times per week and had several concerns including flooding of the field area, condition of the tennis courts, poor overall maintenance of the park, needed brush removal and a lack of garbage receptacles. He noted that some garbage cans had not been emptied for as long as three years. Kurth added that inappropriate use of the park by youth also exists frequently.

Vetter responded that re-grading of the park to improve drainage would be included in the construction documents. Vetter noted that water is intended to move through the park as part of the watershed process so the issue of drainage will not be solved.

In response to Mr. Kurth's maintenance concerns, Vetter noted that the stairway in the park's northwest corner will be rebuilt and buckthorn will be removed as the schedule and funding allow. Vetter added that it is the Public Works Department's policy to leave fallen debris from trees remains unless safety issues exist. Vetter closed by indicating that the plan calls for garbage cans to be added to the park and located in high use areas.

Barone noted that the Public Works Director is reviewing maintenance issues in all city parks. She noted that the city is in the process of adding one additional full-time employee, and also researching other options that would enhance seasonal maintenance of all parks.

In response to Mr. Kurth's concerns related to inappropriate use of the park by youth, Vetter noted that it is staff's hope that increased use of the park for positive purposes, along with added neighborhood involvement in their park will lead to less desirable use within all renewed parks.

Woodrich asked if the plan incorporates lighting as requested by several survey respondents. Vetter stated that lighting in the northwest area of the park and near the play area was part of the plan. Woodrich questioned why grills were

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not incorporated into the plan. Vetter responded that residents in attendance at the meetings had not requested them, adding that in many of the parks, residents are now bringing smaller propane grills for convenience purposes. Hearing no additional requests for comments from the audience, Calkins closed the floor to public comments.

Woodrich moved and Fiterman seconded a motion to accept and approve the master plan for Junction Park as proposed with the addition of picnic grills in recommended areas and continued efforts to work with the watershed district to improve wetland conditions. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

**A-2. Boulder Creek Park Renewal Concept Review**

Vetter provided an overview of the park renewal process for Boulder Creek Park. He noted that neighborhood meetings were conducted on February 3 and February 25, 2004, and that 77 surveys were returned to assist in the design process.

Vetter reviewed the target improvement areas for Boulder Creek Park that included the following:

- Added visibility to the playground area
- Retaining and improving the basketball and tennis courts
- Improvements to the warming house
- Improvements to the parks natural qualities

Vetter noted that a board member of the Riley-Purgatory-Bluff Creek Watershed District was present at the first neighborhood meeting and expressed her desire for the district and city to work collaboratively to improve the wetlands located in the park. She also offered for the watershed district to pay for those improvements.

Calkins opened the floor to park board member comments.

Mills asked about ornamental fencing proposed near the playground area. Vetter explained that this type of fencing is designed for improved appearance over other fencing types such as chain link. Vetter added that the fencing will help safeguard the area between the parking lot and play areas. Mills requested that mutt-mitt bags be available within the park.

Gefvert asked what the neighborhood's reaction was to what appears to be a reduced skating area. Vetter responded that the skating area allocated is approximately the same as what is currently provided. He added that residents did not express any concerns during the review process.

Calkins opened the floor to public comments.

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Robert Lommel, 16500 Creekside Lane, expressed his desire to improve the natural areas and added that mutt-mitts were indeed needed.

Steen Erickson, 5933 Scenic Place, commented that he liked the proposed natural growth areas. He added that dog problems exist and asked for clarification of the city's leash law. Erickson commented that the warming house could be improved by creating greater visibility with windows and improved lighting. Mr. Erickson also noted that he lived adjacent to the park and would appreciate any screening that could be provided.

Vetter responded that improvements were in the plans, but not scheduled yet, to address Boulder Creek Park through the natural resources management program. Johnson reported that due to an increasing number of dog related complaints, staff from several city departments will meet in the next few days to consider changes to the existing park regulations related to dogs.

Goodyear asked what measures were in place for buffering. Vetter noted that he is working with Mr. Erickson and other neighbors regarding options for buffering between private property and the park.

Goodyear asked if the area designated for informal ballfield use would require grading. Vetter responded that it would.

Fiterman asked what renovations were planned for the warming house. Vetter noted that most of the city's existing warming houses are block structures with no windows. Vetter indicated that windows would be added for increased visibility from both the inside and outside of the building.

Calkins requested that desirable plantings be incorporated into the plan, leaving plan types up to staff's discretion.

Gefvert moved and Mills seconded a motion to approve the Master Plan for Boulder Creek Park as submitted by staff. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

**A-3. Woodgate Park**

Vetter provided an overview of the Woodgate Park planning process. He reported that 76 surveys were completed by residents, and neighborhood meetings were conducted on February 3 and February 25, 2004.

Vetter identified the target park improvements identified through the process as:

- Increasing the visibility of the play equipment
- Retaining and improving the existing basketball and tennis courts
- Improved trails and on nature loop

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Vetter noted that based on information collected at the first neighborhood meeting and surveys received, two concept plans identified as "A" and "B" were developed. He then noted that a master plan for the park was agreed upon by residents at the second neighborhood meeting and included the following improvements:

- Pond improvements (subject to watershed district funding)
- New play structures designated for different ages
- Small shade structure
- Seating areas
- Mini loop trail around play areas
- Improved parking area with turnaround option.
- A nature trail loop
- Drinking fountain, bike rack and garbage receptacles.
- Restoration of the natural areas
- Improvements to the existing steps located in the northwest area of the park

Calkins opened the floor to park board member questions.

Woodrich asked for an overview of improvements designated for the parking area. Vetter responded that the parking area is similar to the existing lot with the provision of an elbow that will allow drivers to turn around when exiting the lot.

Woodrich noted that she felt the tennis courts were in need of significant repair. Vetter agreed and indicated that these improvements were included in the project.

Calkins opened the floor to public comments.

George Wells, 15658 South Woodgate Road, expressed concerns over the recommendation for a woodchip nature trail, overall park maintenance, the existing condition of the tennis courts and dogs running loose in the park.

Bill Steinbicker, 15702 Woodgate Road South, commented that downed trees within the park are a real concern both visually and for safety reasons. He also informed the board that he was initially in favor of adding the nature trail but has since changed his mind and thinks it should be reconsidered.

Hearing no additional requests, Calkins closed the floor to public comments.

Mills noted that she had received a resident's e-mail expressing concerns about the lack of green space provided under the master plan. Mills asked if the play

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area could be reduced to provide added green space. Vetter responded that the play area could be reduced slightly, but would not make a significant difference in the green space provided.

Goodyear asked if a tennis bounce wall was an option at Woodgate. Vetter responded that it was not requested through the meeting process but could be added if the park board desires. Jason Amberg of Brauer & Associates, Ltd., estimated the cost of adding a bounce board at \$5,000-\$10,000, noting that fence supports would need to be replaced with stronger supports.

Woodrich expressed support for the overall Master Plan, noting that it seems to be in line with the recommendations included in the POST Plan. Woodrich suggested delaying a decision on the nature trail until a focus group or other forms of review could be completed.

Gefvert asked how the proposed nature trail might impact wildlife. Amberg responded that he did not see a major impact, but agreed that a decision on the trail could be delayed without impacting the remaining parts of the plan.

Dave Morgan, 15689 Woodgate Road South, commented that the nature trail was not needed and was concerned about flags posted at the park that appear to indicate the route of the trail.

Woodrich asked how the trail concept was initiated. Vetter responded that the request was generated at the first neighborhood meeting by a few residents.

Calkins encouraged the practice of over-land water management as opposed to the use of pipes for water flow. He asked that this be reviewed with the Watershed District.

Gefvert indicated that he would prefer that the trail be build at this time, but would be okay with delaying the trail until further review.

Woodrich moved and Goodyear seconded a motion to approve the Master Plan for Woodgate Park with the exception of a delay in developing the nature trail loop until further review. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

**A-4. Reich Park**

Calkins opened the discussion by noting that although a master plan has been prepared for Reich Park, staff has indicated that unlike other park renewal projects, a clear consensus has not been reached by the neighborhood. Calkins informed the Board, staff and residents in attendance that instead of reviewing the Master Plan in place, this review will essentially be a third neighborhood

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meeting and provide residents an opportunity to express their desires to the park board.

Calkins opened the floor to resident comments.

Jerry Rasmussen, 18516 South Lane, expressed his concerns regarding safety along South Lane, which he views to be a busy street. He requested that no parking be added for the park off of South Lane and that the skating rink be located in the lower area (north) of the park.

Nicole Durocher, 18700 South Lane, agreed with Rasmussen that skating should be located in the lower portion of the park. She explained that her property borders the park in the southwest corner and any of the upper level of the park will directly impact her. She added that she also opposes placement of the play equipment on the upper level, feeling that the current location works fine. She closed by saying that the Master Plan does not include anything she requested through the neighborhood process.

Scott Ewald, 18508 South Lane, commented that he believes concepts A and B do not represent the input provided in the neighborhood process. He expressed concerns that the existing pond does not function properly, drainage needs to be corrected, recreational amenities need to remain on lower level and the play equipment should have a foam safety surface as opposed to wood fibers or other materials. He indicated that he likes the existing park design and feels it does not need to change.

Kathy Casmer, 18525 Beaver Trail, commented that the existing maintenance of the park is poor and needs to be improved. She added that she likes the location of the play equipment in its current location below the hill. Casmer indicated that the skating rink in its current location at the bottom of the hill impacts use of the hill and provides poor turf conditions for use during non-skating months. She noted that drainage from the park enters her property and asked that this be reviewed as part of the plan. She closed by informing the Board that the petition submitted to the park board was only circulated to residents south of the park and not those to the east, west and north areas.

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

Fiterman informed the residents that drainage corrections were not a "quick fix".

Gefvert noted that safety within the park seems to be a common resident concern and suggested it be added to the list of targets for the park. Calkins asked if safety issues were addressed in the Master Plan. Vetter responded that they have, citing improved visibility of the play equipment, police department

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communications and infrastructure improvements as examples. Vetter added that “wood chips” are not proposed as the play equipment safety surface, “engineered wood fibers” are. He noted that this option provides the best safety options for surfacing in the industry.

Calkins noted that comments from this meeting seemed to all be consistent in their desires for the park. Vetter responded that they were consistent, much different from the previous meetings.

Calkins asked if the ice rink and tennis courts could be combined for multiple use. Vetter indicated he would review the possibility.

Johnson summarized the input he heard from the Board and residents as follows:

- No added parking off of South Lane
- Keep existing play equipment location. Raise elevation if needed to correct drainage and remove undesirable brush as need to improve visibility
- Make needed corrections to drainage
- Correct erosion problems associated with drainage

Hearing no further requests, Calkins closed the discussion. Vetter stated a revised plan would be available for park board and resident review at the June 2, 2004 meeting.

**4-B. Review of Minnetonka Loop Trail System**

City Trail Coordinator Dean Elstad provided an overview of the trails system including background, concept plan development, enforcement/safety, maintenance, and future plans.

Fiterman asked how emergency calls are made along the system. Elstad responded that there are no call boxes within the system, and users rely on cell phones, or residential calls. Elstad indicated that problems have been minimal other than dog-related complaints.

Mills questioned how future requests are considered by the City, noting that a sidewalk on Williston was a concern throughout the McKenzie Park planning session. Elstad explained that when he receives a petition, he reviews the request along with other city departments. If feasible, funding affects the timing of projects when they are incorporated into the CIP.

Woodrich asked how maintenance is coordinated. Elstad responded that all maintenance calls are forwarded to Craig Sinclair, Park Maintenance Manager in Public Works. Elstad noted that Public Works has one full-time and other

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seasonal employees for trail maintenance. He added that over 60,000 mutt-mitt bags have been provided on the trails.

Gefvert commented that he has at times observed police cars on the trail system. Elstad responded that the police will follow-up on any calls they receive.

Woodrich asked if the city considered increasing the width to 10' in the future. Elstad indicated that the city had not considered this, however at some point funding will need to be provided to renew the trail system.

Calkins asked if a long-term funding plan for the trails was in place. Barone responded that the city would take a comprehensive approach to trails as we shift from system development to long-term needs. Elstad used the conversion of some trail sections from aggregate to paved surface as an example.

Calkins noted that it is better to provide asphalt surfaces with regards to water quality.

The Park Board thanks Elstad for the information he provided.

**4. Park Board Member Reports**

Woodrich provided positive comments regarding the use and design of the Ford Park trail. She asked for information on how often the surface will be swept, and commented that a tree was down over the Hilloway trail. Vetter indicated he would have Sinclair respond to both issues.

Calkins commented that the Libbs Lake Park retaining wall has collapsed and wanted staff to be aware of this. Vetter responded that staff was aware of the problem, adding that the renewal process will begin soon.

Calkins asked how much effort goes into designing parks during the park renewal process for sustainability and reduced maintenance. Vetter responded that these are both focuses of the Public Works Department as they develop construction documents for each project.

**5. Information Items**

Nothing to report.

**6. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items**

Calkins and Gefvert suggested placing dog leash regulations and downed tree policies on the agenda for future discussion.

Calkins reminded the Board of the May 12 park board tour of parks and facilities.

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**7. Adjournment**

Gefvert moved and Fiterman seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:08 p.m. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.