

**MINUTES OF THE  
MINNETONKA PARK BOARD  
FEBRUARY 2, 2005**

**1. Roll Call**

Park Board members Bruce Gefvert, Tim Goodyear, Paul Lehman, Freinde Mills, and Sue Woodrich were present. Attending staff was GERALYN BARONE, Dave Johnson, Craig Sinclair and Perry Vetter.

Chair Lehman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes- January 5, 2005**

Gefvert moved and Woodrich seconded a motion to approve the Minutes as submitted for the meeting of January 5, 2005. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

**3. Citizens Wishing to Discuss Items Not on the Agenda**

None.

**4. Business Items**

**A. Minnetonka Diamond Club Proposal for Bennett Park Athletic Field Improvements**

Johnson provided the introduction for the item noting the Minnetonka Diamond Club had previously come before the park board in January to present an option for upgrading fields at Minnetonka High School. Johnson suggested that the board consider all options presented in determining a funding recommendation for the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for 2006-2010. Johnson noted that any options presented at this stage are contingent upon several unanswered questions raised by neighborhood concerns, agreement negotiations, and funding both city and private.

Johnson thanked the individuals involved with the Diamond Club for their efforts to address an identified need for regulation baseball fields in the community. He then introduced Larry Foster, president of the Diamond Club.

Foster described the representation of the Diamond Club, noting that the organization has a 501C3 status and is comprised of several independent diamond sports organizations within the footprint of the Minnetonka School District. Foster noted the Diamond Club is in the process of developing several options for field improvements within the cities that make up the school district.

Foster informed the board that one goal of the Diamond Club's is to provide a field for children with special needs who are interested in the game of baseball. He added that the Diamond Club has been working with the Miracle League, an

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organization with the mission statement “*Every child deserves the chance to play baseball*”, to help meet their goal.

Foster then introduced Kevin Thorson, executive director of the Miracle League of Minnesota. Thorson reported the Miracle League has 15 major league baseball teams involved in the program nationwide. Thorson described the program that allows children with special needs to participate in the game of baseball by integrating fields specifically designed fields, with standard baseball and softball fields’ complexes. Thorson added that the buddy system used, pairing special needs children with those without special needs for assistance, is a rewarding experience for all children involved. Thorson showed a video presentation of the Miracle League.

Thorson then introduced Bob Jasper, director of Long-Term Planning for Bennett Family Park (BFP).

Jasper introduced two potential options for upgrading athletic fields at BFP, both involving the addition of a Miracle League field. He noted that the existing BFP layout includes parking for 145 spaces, five athletic fields for baseball and softball, and additional property currently undeveloped.

Jasper presented Option “A” with the following features:

1. An added Miracle Field (field #6)
2. Relocation of existing field #5
3. Relocated/expanded parking for 290 vehicles
4. Handicap parking for 27 vehicles
5. Natural turf upgrades to fields 1 & 4 (baseball)
6. Lighting of fields 1 & 4
7. Enhanced walkways throughout BFP
8. Potential additional north entrance off of Hwy 101.

Jasper asked for feedback from park board members or staff regarding Option “A”.

Woodrich asked for clarification on how the designated handicap parking area would serve the Miracle Field. Jasper explained.

Lehman noted the apparent elevation difference from the existing field #5 to the proposed parking area and asked how it would be addressed to prevent potential drainage problems. Jasper responded elevation issues would need to be addressed during the planning stages. He noted the undeveloped land is at a higher elevation, providing the best soil conditions in the park. Jasper introduced Giovanni Orbita of McLain & Associates, to address questions related to the Option “A” conceptual design. He acknowledged additional testing is required prior to a final plan being developed.

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Jasper then provided an overview of Option "B" for BFP. Features of Option "B" included the following:

1. Same design for fields 1-6 as shown in Option "A"
2. The addition of a new regulation baseball field (#7)
3. Field #7 would not be lit for play
4. Redesigned parking to accommodate field #7.

Jasper asked for feedback from park board members or staff regarding Option "B".

Barone asked if the plan complies with the city's wetland buffer ordinance. Orbita indicated that he is working with Jo Colleran from the city's planning staff to determine if the plan meets minimum requirements. Orbita indicated the wetlands within BFP would require delineation.

Johnson reminded the board that the city purchased a conservation easement with BFP in 2002 for 5-6 acres of property. He noted the agreement provides a buy-back option for 1.5 acres of the property if BFP would choose to do so. Barone asked if Option "B" would require more than 1.5 acres of the property defined in the conservation. Jasper responded that it would.

Jasper provided participation numbers for programs conducted at BFP. He noted that of the 1,758 youth who participated in baseball and softball programs last year, 52% were Minnetonka residents. Jasper indicated the nine other cities located within the Minnetonka School District, would be approached by the Diamond Club for contributions to improve BFP. Jasper indicated that contributions from private, civil and corporate contributions would also be sought. Jasper added that consideration has been given to the selling of naming rights at the park as a source of funding.

Woodrich asked how the responsibilities related to fundraising were assigned within the BFP organization. Jasper responded he would take the lead, and Thorsen would be responsible for fundraising related to the Miracle League field.

Jasper noted that as proposed, Option "A" would provide an additional 91 games played at BFP, and Option "B" provides 300 additional games. He added both of these projections does not include additional games played on little league field #4, which is proposed to be lit.

Barone asked if the Diamond Club looked for field locations in other cities? Foster indicated to date they have not, but plan to do so.

Lehman summarized the options presented, noting that at a minimum, Option "B" would require termination of the existing conservation easement.

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Woodrich commented that she felt the Miracle Field would be a great addition, however, the planning process for both options has a long way to go. She agreed with Lehman that the possibility of adding a field #7 creates many unanswered questions. Jasper acknowledged further work needs to be done and the Diamond Club will continue to move forward. He thanked the park board for their time and attention.

**B. Consideration of an Athletic Field Lighting Proposal from the Glen Lake Mighty Mites Organization**

Mark Gregg, representing the Glen Lake Mighty Mites (GLMM) provided an overview of the organization's request to add lighting to little league fields #1 and #2 at Glen Lake Park. Gregg provided a PowerPoint presentation that summarized the GLMM mission and purpose. He noted that participation in GLMM programs is between 450-500 annually, compared to the Big Willow and Hopkins organizations that register closer to 300 youth. Gregg added that both of these organizations have lighted fields to accommodate additional play.

Gregg noted that the GLMM program has a strong history and is financially sound. He indicated that GLMM is proposing to pay the entire cost of purchasing and installing the lights, but requires city permission to do so since the fields are located in a city park. Gregg acknowledged that support from adjacent neighbors might be a challenge, but indicated that support from GLMM participants has been favorable during recent registration sessions.

Johnson noted that if approved, usage of the lights would be regulated under a city council approved policy. He noted that the existing Big Willow Park operating policy allows for little league lights to be used no later than 9:50 p.m. for play. He added that under certain situations, lights at Big Willow Park are allowed to remain on for maintenance purposes only until 10:20 p.m.

Gregg indicated that additional lights would provide between 60 -120 additional games per season depending on how they were scheduled. He added that the cost to purchase and install the lights is estimated at \$93,000 plus electrical costs.

Woodrich asked what the electrical needs are. Gregg introduced Craig Gallop of Musco Lighting. Gallop responded the transformer currently there, needs to be upgraded. Gregg estimates the cost for use of the lights to be \$10 per night.

Goodyear asked what the anticipated timing was for installation if approved. Johnson replied that additional park board and city council meetings to acquire approvals could be scheduled into May, meaning that it is possible lights could be added during the 2005 season.

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Lehman opened the floor to the public for comments regarding the GLMM request

Tom Mooney, 5128 Woodhill Road, voiced his concern regarding the scheduling of a neighborhood meeting as premature since he was under the impression the GLMM board had not yet approved consideration of the project.

Lehman asked Gregg to comment on Mooney's concerns. Gregg assured the park board that he had been directed by the GLMM board to approach the city with this request.

Woodrich commented that she felt the proposal and presentation were impressive. She supported the need to conduct a neighborhood meeting to gauge resident concerns.

Lehman noted that the process to date, and the scheduling of a neighborhood meeting are similar to the city's handling of the Big Willow Little League's request a few years ago.

Goodyear moved and Mills seconded a motion to direct staff to schedule a neighborhood meeting on March 2, 2005 to present interested residents with the GLMM request and receive resident input regarding the proposal. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

**C. Review of Proposed 2006-2010 CIP Recommendation**

Vetter presented an overview of the item and provided an illustration of staff recommendations for the 2006-2010 Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Vetter noted that at the park board's request, a line item for "Scheduled Park Maintenance Improvements" with funding allocated after 2010 was added. Vetter noted as recommended by staff, the CIP has a slight deficit in the year 2007 of \$2,000, but at the completion of 2010, maintains a \$155,000 balance.

Vetter noted that prior to this evening's discussion on field needs presented by the Diamond Club, staff had included a total of \$250,000 for athletic field improvements (\$125,000 in 2009 and \$125,000 in 2010).

Lehman noted that 2008 ended the year with a \$269,000 surplus and suggested allocating an additional \$125,000 for field improvements in 2008. Woodrich agreed.

Gefvert moved and Goodyear seconded a motion to recommend to the city council the 2006-2010 as prepared by staff with the addition of \$125,000 in 2008 for athletic field improvements for a total of \$375,000, and the desire of

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the park board to increase this amount if changes in project status occur within the overall CIP. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

Mills was excused from the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

**D. Review of 2005 Park Board Action Steps**

This item was tabled until the March 2, 2005 meeting.

**E. DNR Trail Grant Request**

Vetter informed the park board city staff had submitted a grant application to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for a 50/50 matching grant up to \$100,000 for the Minnehaha Creek Headquarters Park Boardwalk and Trail Improvement. Funding from the DNR might be possible as part of their Local Trail Connections Program.

Vetter explained that the DNR has encouraged municipalities to submit letters of support from community organizations, and requested that the park board submit a letter supporting the project.

Goodyear moved and Gefvert seconded a motion to direct staff to draft a letter of support from the park board for a DNR Local Trail Connections Grant for construction of the Minnehaha Creek Headwaters Park Boardwalk and Trail. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

Woodrich was excused from the meeting at 9:35 p.m., leaving the park board without a quorum.

**5. Park Board Member Reports**

Goodyear requested that a park sign and regulations be placed at Kelly Park and community gardens. Sinclair indicated the sign would be placed as weather permits.

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**6. Information Items**

Barone updated the park board on the status of the Minnehaha Creek Visioning Plan, noting that 16 proposals have been received from interested consultants as a result of an RFP that was prepared by the city.

Johnson informed the board the Mayor will officially appoint Denny Lambert and Jahn Anderson to the park board at the city council's February 14, 2005 meeting. Johnson indicated Lambert and Anderson would attend the March 2, 2005 park board meeting to begin their terms.

**7. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items**

Johnson noted that the park board's 2005 Action Steps are on the March 2, 2005 meeting agenda. He added that a neighborhood meeting to respond to the GLMM athletic field lighting request would also be scheduled for that evening.

**8. Adjournment**

The park board meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.