

1. Roll Call

City Council members in attendance included Mayor Janis Callison, Bob Ellingson, James Hiller, Terry Schneider, and Brad Wiersum. Park Board members in attendance included Jahn Anderson, Bruce Gefvert, Tim Goodyear, Amber Greves, Tess Komarek, Denny Lambert, and Patrick Robben. Staff members in attendance included GERALYN BARONE, Jo Colleran, Dean Elstad, John Gunyou, Dave Johnson and Perry Vetter.

Park Board Chair Goodyear called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Discussion Items

A. 2008 Park Board progress report from the Chair

Chair Goodyear presented the park board's strategic plan that was developed in January of 2008 and requested feedback from council members that would assist the park board prepare for 2009.

Goodyear followed with a summary of park board accomplishments for the year including approval of 2009 - 2013 CIP projects; development of plans for the new Oakhaven Park; development of changes to the park regulations; progress made on changes to the leash law related to parks; and rate recommendations for Gray's Bay Marina boat slips. Gefvert provided a summary of the Glen Lake Ski Trail operations and the park board's recommendation to extend the operations to the 2008 - 2009 seasons. Lambert talked about the board updating the Comprehensive Field Use Policy and the joint athletic field project agreement with Bennett Family Park. Greves closed by providing a summary of the board's recommendations for the scheduling of outdoor ice rinks, and a review of the Shady Oak Beach operational changes implemented in 2008.

Schneider suggested that a future discussion item between the council and park board could focus on how the park board's strategic plan is in alignment with community values.

Ellingson noted that he was pleased with the improvements at Kinsel Park that took into account the recreational desires of adult residents with the boardwalk and trails, and encouraged the park board to continue that trend in all other parks when improvements are made. Callison noted that Ellingson's comments were in line with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan that was recently adopted.

B. Bond referendum project update

Parks and Trails Division Manager Perry Vetter provided an update of Park Renewal projects addressed in 2008. He summarized the work completed in five

parks including Big Willow, Guilliams, Lone Lake, Kinsel and Glen Lake. He noted that six parks remain to be addressed through the park renewal program including Oberlin, Mayflower and Lake Rose in 2009; and Lake Charlotte, Green Circle and Mooney in years yet to be determined.

City Manager John Gunyou provided an update on the Open Space portion of the bond referendum noting that the city has purchased one parcel of property on Minnetonka Boulevard since the referendum was passed, and continues to rent three other parcels on Minnetonka Boulevard that will be used as part of future Upper Minnehaha Creek park improvements. Gunyou further noted that the city acquired a conservation easement from Bennett Park ensuring that the natural areas east of the athletic fields will never be developed. Gunyou closed with a reminder that the city also entered into a purchase agreement with an option to acquire 30 acres owned by Ann Cullen-Smith.

Natural Resources Division Manager Jo Colleran provided a summary of the Living Legacy Program. She indicated that initially 180 properties were rated and narrowed down to the top five based on a preset list of criteria. She also noted that staff is working closely with Andrew Fuller to create a conservation easement on his 7.6 acre parcel. She added that Mr. Fuller has signed an agreement with the city to place six acres, including a mesic oak forest, into an easement.

Schneider asked why staff would not continue down the list and contact the next five highest properties on the priority list. Colleran responded that staff would do so.

Gunyou indicated that development of the new Mills Park would begin in 2009 and asked Vetter to provide an update. Vetter informed those in attendance that the site plan is being developed and is tentatively scheduled to come before the park board in February of 2009.

C. Implementation of the recommendations included in the Comprehensive Plan

Assistant City Manager Geralyn Barone provided background to the discussion item noting that the park board will have responsibilities associated with the recently adopted comprehensive guide plan that will be incorporated into the park board's 2009 Strategic Plan. She requested council and park board member feedback on priorities that should be considered for the upcoming year.

Callison requested that education be provided related to lake and shoreline ordinance revisions as well as trail development.

Schneider indicated that informing residents about natural resources efforts and education should also be a priority due to a new generation of residents using our park system.

Wiersum mentioned growing concerns related to childhood obesity, and how increased use of the park system by children should be a goal. Barone mentioned the initiative of the Recreation Services Department to implement a summer daycare program in 2009 called "Kid's Corner" which is intended to provide active recreation to children. Recreation Services Director Dave Johnson added that his department is a member of the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) "Step Up To Health" initiative which focuses on reducing childhood obesity.

Colleran noted that volunteer hours from resident senior citizens have increased significantly over the past three years from 785 hours to over 1,800 hours.

D. Trail System Review

Vetter reviewed the staff report and noted that the trail revitalization plan includes three methods for improvement: trail rehabilitation, missing trail connections and new trail segment construction. Vetter noted that all trail expenses are detailed in the Capital Improvements Program and funded through the Park Dedication Fund.

Gunyou noted that the initial trail development concept was centered on the development of trails for preliminary purposes, most notably walking and running. He noted that the needs of today are different from those in place several years ago and staff has developed rating criteria which reflects the changes. Gunyou noted that the criteria in place of community access (20% weighting); cost effectiveness (20% weighting); degree of difficulty (15% weighting); and nature of use (45% weighting); is not steadfast, but instead guidelines that staff is proposing. He asked for council and park board feedback on the criteria established by staff.

Schneider indicated he felt the rating criteria developed by staff was reasonable, however he felt that the process lacked community discussion and the desire for a rural feel in the community versus trails and safety. Schneider indicated that a dialog between the community and park board or council, needs to take place in order to determine what the next generation of trails will be in the community. He emphasized that this policy discussion should take place at the community level.

Callison noted that special considerations need to be given for projects with unique circumstances and used the Hutchins Drive link as an example of a segment that could require special considerations.

Weirsum felt that the rating criteria serves a purpose but does not take into account all factors and should not be the only criteria considered.

Hiller indicated that the initial rating criteria do not provide him with an understanding of the potential usage or expressed demand for the project under

consideration. Gunyou summarized that a cost benefit element might need to be considered. Hiller agreed.

Vetter indicated that the Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) is in the process of preparing criteria and comparisons for trails that might be beneficial to the city once completed.

Gunyou asked for input on council member Schneider's feedback related to a forum for collecting community input. Schneider indicated that he was not sure of the forum but suggested that one possibility would be for residents to review photos of recently completed projects and ask residents to rate each project to determine their level of approval. Gunyou indicated that a process similar to that in place for road construction and park renewal projects could be implemented.

Weirsum suggested posting upcoming projects early in 2009 in order to obtain input.

Schneider indicated that he foresees a new phase where the focus is more on pedestrian safety and access than from the earlier year's plan of connecting major parks.

Weirsum agreed, adding that he felt the trail needs of the users are changing, and the need for increased public awareness and input is required.

Gunyou noted that the recently completed Comprehensive Guide Plan emphasizes the city's villages and the desire for established connections throughout the city. To summarize the discussion, Gunyou indicated that he is hearing from the council and park board a desire to communicate trail projects in advance and establish a system for collecting resident input in the process. Callison suggested that this process should extend beyond just trails.

Greves indicated that she felt the public comment process got off to a good start with the Comprehensive Plan process and felt this input was something that the city could build from. Weirsum agreed, indicating that the focus might be more on the Comprehensive Plan initially, followed by the development of a clear vision and established vision for future trail development.

3. Adjournment

Callison thanked the park board for their efforts and accomplishments in 2009. The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.