

1. Roll Call

Park Board members in attendance included, Patty Acomb, Bruce Gefvert, Tim Goodyear, and Patrick Robben. Staff members in attendance included GERALYN Barone, Jo Colleran, Bob Hill, Dave Johnson and Perry Vetter.

2. Approval of Minutes

Robben moved and Goodyear seconded a motion to approve the Minutes of the February 7, 2009 meeting of the park board. All voted "Yes." Motion carried.

3. Citizens Wishing to Discuss Items Not on the Agenda

Parks and Trails Division Manager introduced Eagle Scout candidate Michael Schnack who requested permission to complete an Eagle Scout project at Jidana Park. Schnack explained that his proposal would include the replacement of the existing canoe dock at Jidana with one comparable to the landing at the Minnehaha Creek Headwaters. In addition, he noted that the grid system embedded in the landing area for improved traction while loading and unloading canoes would also be replaced, along with the potential installation of a wing dam to improve access to the landing area.

Gefvert asked what the timeline and process would be if the park board gave the approval for the project. Schnack indicated that the Boy Scout Council still needs to approve his request, and if so, the project would need to be completed by his 18th birthday in September of 2009.

Goodyear expressed his appreciation for the willingness of Schnack to take on such a detailed project.

Gefvert asked how the project would be funded. Vetter responded that the Scouts will first seek donations of materials and funding, with the city providing assistance for remaining needs. Vetter noted that the project is in need of completion and would have to be completed at the city's expense if the volunteer option had not come forward.

Robben commended Schnack for taking on this responsibility and thanked him for his presentation.

Robben moved and Gefvert seconded a motion to approve the request of Michael Schnack to construct a new canoe landing at Jidana Park for the completion of his Eagle Scout project. All voted "yes". Motion carried.

4. Business Items

A. Consideration of an off-leash dog park at Lone Lake Park

Vetter provided a background summary of actions leading up to this meeting. He noted that in 2008, the park board began reviewing possible changes to the city's park regulations that had not received a comprehensive review in several years. Vetter indicated that the primary focus of the park board's discussions related to park regulations centered on off-leash regulations related to dogs in the park system. This process concluded at the October 1, 2008 meeting with the park board recommending that areas of four parks including Big Willow, Purgatory, Victoria-Evergreen and Jidana be established as off-leash voice and sight command areas; with rules and regulations established to better define what voice and sight command means. Vetter noted that staff was further directed to review options and develop a Master Plan for the establishment of an off-leash fenced dog park in the city's park system to address an interest of many residents who spoke at the meeting.

Vetter noted that in 2007, Lone Lake Park went through the park renewal process developed by the city as part of the 2001 bond referendum to update the park system. He noted that at that time, there was not enough support by residents in attendance to include a dog park as part of the final master plan for park improvements. However, the southeast portion of Lone Lake was revisited during the park regulations discussion in October of 2008.

Vetter indicated that Lone Lake is a community park, 146 acres in size, located in the southeast portion of Minnetonka. Amenities in the park include an athletic field, tennis courts, two picnic shelters, a basketball court, play equipment and horseshoes. In addition, the park is developed around Lone Lake and includes a dock for fishing and viewing. Vetter added that staff is currently involved in completing improvements to the park as defined by the approved 2007 park renewal Master Plan.

Vetter then provided background on the property identified in the southeast portion of the park for a proposed dog park. He noted that property was purchased using LAWCON Funds by the city in 1975, with the intent to develop athletic fields. Vetter noted that an additional parcel off of Rowland Road on the park's southern boundary was later purchased and planned for athletic fields with the intention to sell the southeast portion to help fund the improvements. Vetter noted that in the end, both parcels were kept and no athletic fields were ever developed.

Vetter provided an overview of the comprehensive Master Plan developed by staff for a dog park proposed on a 12 acre parcel in the southeast portion of Lone Lake Park. He provided a visual tour of the site and noted features of the concept plan including:

- The entry area located on the north edge near the existing tennis courts
- Double entry gates for leashing/unleashing of dogs
- A series of defined woodchip trails
- Designated ADA accessible area
- Designated area for small dogs
- Training and agility area with equipment provided
- Designated ADA parking area off of Rowland Road
- Welded wire fencing for improved look and flexibility

Vetter indicated that the estimated cost for construction as designed in the concept is \$16,500 and provided a comparison of these costs to those required for other amenities in the park system including park play equipment, hockey rinks, tennis courts and basketball courts; all of which were considerably more expensive to install.

Vetter continued with a summary of existing dog parks located in surrounding communities, including Bryant Lake Park and four other locations operated by the Three Rivers Park District, two parks in Eden Prairie, one park in Edina, one park in Plymouth, two parks in St. Louis Park, and one park operated by Carver County. He noted that the proposed plan for Lone Lake differs from most of the existing parks due to its larger area, more available walkways and the training equipment area.

Vetter closed by indicating that the most recent resident survey indicated that 33% of households have dogs as compared to 34% that have children. He added that it is staff's recommendation to add a dedicated dog park to the park system to compliment the addition of the four voice and sight command locations the park board is recommending to the city council. He noted that the recommendations of the board have not been forwarded to the council pending the recommendations of the park board related to a dedicated dog park and related fees for both the dog park and voice and site command area permits.

Goodyear thanked Vetter for his detailed report and asked if park board members had any questions and comments prior to opening the floor for public comments.

Gefvert commented that the Master Plan was very comprehensive and well prepared, answering most of the questions he initially had. One question he had was why the estimated cost of \$16,500 was considerably lower than the budgeted amount of \$30,000. Vetter responded that the initial budget amount was included in the CIP without knowing an exact location for the proposed site. He added that some cost would be saved by utilizing Public Works Department crews to provide the labor required.

Hearing no further questions, Goodyear opened the floor to public comments.

David Pecitory, 4340 Victoria Street, commented that the plan was impressive and added that his only suggestion was to consider eliminating or reducing the size of the small dog area due to his experience that these areas are often not used.

Mike Hoffman, 11601 Lone Lake Ridge, expressed concerns with the proposal including the proximity to two existing parks within two miles of Lone Lake; the fact that during the 2007 park renewal process there was no stated interest in a dog park from residents; and much of the parking is restricted in the winter by the service gate that is closed. Hoffman questioned how many citations for dogs being off-leash were issued in 2008, noting that lack of enforcement is an issue.

Bart Jordano, 11621 Vista Drive, identified himself as the President of the Vista Homeowners Association and indicated that he has both association and personal concerns to present. Speaking for the association, he complimented the time and effort put into the plan, however noted concerns related to the proximity of 10 homes adjacent to the park and the impact on property values and wildlife. He expressed concern that not everyone in his association was aware of the proposal and suggested that direct mailings be used for future notices. Jordano added that six of the seven association board members voted in opposition of the proposal and asked that the project be delayed so that others had a chance to review it. Speaking on his own behalf, he indicated that he felt public dollars should be spent on projects that serve a greater share of the public and not smaller group such as dog owners.

Janet Sanford, 11510 Bren Road, noted that she was a dog owner and had several concerns with the park. She noted that the area is currently used informally as an off-leash area and that the park board has already allocated four other parks as voice & sight command areas. She added that funds should be used for more important needs. Her primary concerns included use of such a large parcel of property; loss of the area for other activities such as skiing; lack of cleanup by dog owners; monitoring of the site; parking and the proximity to existing locations. She asked that the property remain as is.

Rebecca Summers, 11207 Old Bren Road, thanked the park board and staff for the amount of work put into developing the concept. She noted concerns related to the proposed hours of 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. and related noise; the loss of such a large portion of quality park land; the location in the city (southwest corner); parking and added traffic; proximity to the cemetery and conflict of use; and possible tree removal required to install the park. Summers added that the park renewal referendum was based on neighborhood input for park improvements and felt that the neighborhood needs to be heard. She closed by saying that she had many minor concerns, however put all together, they were extensive. She requested that the property remain as is.

Sally Velick, 6007 Clarion Circle, expressed appreciation for the plan and was supportive. She noted that she had a small dog and appreciated the inclusion of the small dog area. She closed by stating that she felt the plan could be "tweaked" to address concerns mentioned to this point.

Ed Freeman, 2700 Crestwood Circle, noted that he was a 32 year resident of Minnetonka and was very much in favor of the addition of a dog park to the park system. He noted that the city has several park amenities that serve smaller populations, including basketball courts and playgrounds; and felt that dog owners are no different. He thanked staff for the amount of detail put into the plan and expressed

appreciation for the number and length of trails placed into the concept. Freeman indicated that the addition of this fenced in area provided a nice alternative for dogs that are not properly trained to use the voice and sight command areas. He noted that dog owners would respect the cemetery area, and suggested that signage and volunteers be utilized to enforce rules. He recommended dawn to dusk hours of operation. Freeman closed by noting that the one change he recommends would be for a common entry to the small dog area so that owners and dogs are not walking through the general area to access the small dog area.

Mary Bell, 5530 Sanibel Drive, expressed appreciation for the work done. She noted that she is a dog owner that currently uses the site but is not supportive of the plan due to the size of the area, parking and impact on the wildlife.

Sandra Stevenson, 15880 Tonkawood Drive, noted that she liked the concept but did not support the location. She supported the need for a dog park in Minnetonka due to the need for dogs to get exercise. Commenting on fees, she felt that a fee of \$30 per year was inexpensive for such a valued recreational experience.

Craig Popken, 11832 Crawford Road, voiced support for the plan noting that he owns dogs and felt that the city needs a dog park. He indicated that he did not feel that the area was too large, noting that the proposal leaves a considerable amount of the park in a natural state.

John Brooks, 5704 Highpark Drive, noted that he lived adjacent to Purgatory Park, has a well trained dog, and was very supportive of the plan. He complimented staff on a well designed plan and appreciated the fact that the park was proposed in such an excellent natural setting. Brooks noted that he is concerned about the financial cost during difficult times; however felt that the proposed cost of \$16,500 was modest. As for the site of the park, he commented that he would not suggest developing a park on a parcel any smaller than the one that is proposed. Brooks expressed concern and sympathy for nearby residents and understood how this addition could be a hardship based on his experiences living next to Purgatory Park.

Carol Thomas, 3408 Druid Lane, noted that she has been a dog owner for 45 years and is very supportive of the plan. She added that her dog does have voice command training; however she takes him to dog parks for the socialization factor that is important to dogs. She closed by noting that while she would like to see the park more centrally located, she supports the plan as presented.

Darrel Flynn, 15605 Highland Heights Drive, expressed concerns related to the plan including the lack of adequate sight lines for pet owners; impact on neighbors to the area; and the small group of residents the park would cater to. He added that dogs get the same amount of exercise on-leash, and while he currently uses the park on a regular basis, would not do so if the dog park was developed.

Hearing no further requests for comment, Goodyear closed the floor to public comments and asked Vetter to respond to questions raised by residents.

Vetter noted the following:

- The parking gate in the winter would be relocated to the top of the hill to allow for parking in the existing tennis court parking lot as identified in the park renewal plan.
- The city provides an attendant at Lone Lake Park from Memorial Day thru Labor Day. This person would not be a regular attendant of the dog park due to other responsibilities, but would be available if problems developed. Vetter added that the new park regulations language changes the park board is recommending help to make violations easier to enforce.
- Clean up of the dog park would be the responsibility of the pet owners. As part of the park board's recommended park regulations, the city requires that all dog owners have a method for pickup and disposal of waste.
- No tree removal would be required with the plan as proposed. Jo Colleran, Natural Resources Division Manager indicated that the wildflowers in the area would be protected and that areas subject to erosion would need to be stabilized.
- No lighting would be used in the parking area designated for ADA parking. Vetter added that the police department prefers that lighting not be used due to the tendency for people violating park rules to move to other locations within the park.

Goodyear requested further park board member comments or questions.

Gefvert asked if a review and analysis of other area dog parks had been completed. Vetter indicated that it had. He noted that the primary provider of facilities was Three Rivers Park District who operates five parks, the closest in proximity being Bryant Lake Park.

Acomb asked if Three Rivers provided any indications of the impact a dog park has on the natural areas. Vetter responded that the Bryant Lake dog park is located on property that includes both open space and wooded areas. He noted that Three Rivers commented that primary maintenance needs relate to general maintenance of the trails, entrance areas and erosion caused by use. Colleran added a comparison to Purgatory Park, and noted that over time the number of informal trails created by human use increases and needs to be dealt with.

Assistant City Manager Geralyn Barone provided feedback on the project from park board member Tess Komarek who was unable to attend the meeting. She noted that Komarek supported the concept of a dog park in the park system and supported charging for both voice/sight command and dog park permits. She questioned if owners or dogs would need to display the permit; and also if there will be both resident and non-resident fees. Vetter responded that the owners will need to visibly display a permit for both areas and said that the issue of non-resident permits would be the decision of the park board and council.

Goodyear indicated that he visited both the Lone Lake site and the Bryant Lake dog park and noted that Bryant Lake is approximately one mile from Lone Lake. Goodyear

said that he was hoping to find out during the public input process what the Bryant Lake dog park did not offer that the Lone Lake site would. He added that to this point in the meeting he had not heard of anything. He added that he supports the concept of adding a dog park to the park system, however he was unsure that Lone Lake was the right location due to the proximity to Bryant Lake Park.

Gefvert agreed with Goodyear's assessment, stating that he also supported the concept but not the location. He added that during his visits to Bryant Lake, he seldom saw more than 3-4 cars parked at the dog park. He commended staff on the well prepared Master Plan. In addition to the proximity concerns to Bryant Lake Park, Gefvert also voiced concerns related to noise and how he can hear people playing tennis from his house, traffic, parking, impact on wildlife and natural resources, and property values; issues mentioned by residents residing close to the proposed site. Gefvert noted that none of these issues could be addressed until the park was up and running.

Robben agreed that there were several unanswered questions ranging from underuse to overuse of a park if it was developed at Lone Lake Park that could not be addressed until the park was developed. He voiced concern with moving ahead unless these issues could be resolved.

Goodyear asked for a park board motion to the staff report question #1: Does the park board wish to pursue creating an off-leash dog park at Lone Lake Park? Gefvert moved and Robben seconded a motion to exclude Lone Lake Park from consideration for a dog park location and continue to support the concept of adding a dog park to the park system by indentifying alternative locations with reduced impacts on residential properties. Goodyear questioned including the wording that would exclude Lone Lake from any future consideration for a voice command area or smaller dog park. Vetter indicated that the city has received several complaints from park users in recent years regarding dogs that were off-leash and not under control. Gefvert indicated that he did not wish to make an amendment to his motion. Goodyear asked for a vote on the motion before the board. Acomb, Gefvert and Robben voted "Yes", Goodyear voted "No". Motion carried.

Goodyear asked for park board discussion on question #2: Does the park board wish to amend or modify the proposed Master Plan for Lone Lake Park? Vetter requested park board feedback on any changes to the proposed plan that the board recommends if an alternative location is considered. Robben asked that the issues of location within the city (centralized if possible), proximity to existing dog parks, and impact on residential properties all be taken into consideration. Vetter indicated that he would survey other cities to see what dog park amenities might be lacking such as small dog areas or agility equipment. Goodyear requested that staff explore the need for small dog areas and also keep in consideration the proximity to existing dog parks.

Goodyear asked for park board discussion related to question #3: Does the park board agree with the staff recommended fee structure for off-leash voice and site command areas and the off-leash dog park? Vetter reminded the board that the initial cost to process a permit is approximately \$10. He added that the initial question was for both

types of permits, however the park board's action this evening eliminated the need to discuss a permit fee for an off-leash dog park. Vetter indicated that staff was recommending a 2-year permit for the voice and sight areas of \$40; and that revenue generated will help to offset processing fees and maintenance of the permitted areas. Vetter added that the park board may wish to consider non-resident fees as well. Goodyear asked what the tendencies were for charging non-resident fees. Johnson responded that for most recreational programs, the fees did not change for non-residents; however the period of time to register was later. He noted that the one exception was Shady Oak Beach where the fees for non-residents were generally 50% higher.

Hearing a request from the audience, Goodyear opened the floor to public comment.

Mike Hoffman, 11601 Lone Lake Ridge expressed concerns related to charging non-residents given the current economic times and his opinion that things will continue to decline as he predicted the current economic recession several years ago. He asked that cities work together to reduce costs to residents. Johnson responded that staff agrees that there is a benefit in working collaboratively with other cities, noting that the city currently shares reciprocal agreements with neighboring cities. He indicated that such agreements would be examined if a service could be exchanged benefitting Minnetonka residents.

Goodyear suggested that a \$60 non-resident fee and \$40 resident fee for 2-year permits be considered. Gefvert moved and Robben seconded a motion to recommend to the city council that fees of \$40 for residents, and \$60 for non-residents be charged for 2-year off-leash voice and sight command permits. All voted "Yes". Motion carried.

Vetter closed by thanking the Natural Resources Division and staff member Bob Hill for their assistance in completing the Lone Lake Dog Park Master Plan. Goodyear echoed Vetter's comments.

B. Review of trail improvement plan

Vetter provided a review of the trail system revitalization plan that included trail rehabilitation, trail connections and construction of new trail segments. He added that the park board will consider the 2010 – 2014 Capital Improvements Plan, including planned trail improvements, at the April 1, 2009 park board meeting.

Vetter reviewed a series of 2009 Minnetonka Memo articles that have and will feature the trail system to promote various links, allow for community input and provide resident education. In addition, he noted that resident input is compiled through the annual resident survey, Summer Festival and City-Wide Open House.

Vetter asked if members had any additional recommendations for presenting trail information to the public.

Goodyear asked if the park board would be the proper channel to provide trail development meetings for residents to provide input. Vetter responded that projects placed in the CIP are not planned to the detail many residents are looking for such as which side of the street, exact locations and the use of retaining walls. He added that the value of resident input comes from what desires residents have for getting from one point to another.

Goodyear suggested use of the website to offer surveys for residents.

Gefvert supported the park board's involvement in events such as the summer festival and open house, Goodyear agreed. Gefvert also suggested surveying users of the trail to collect usage information and see what requests residents might have.

5. Park Board Member Reports

None

6. Information Items

Johnson reviewed informational items included in the meeting packet related to the 2009 Kid's Fest event that took place on February 8th and outdoor ice rink operations that ended on February 8th. In addition, he noted that the Kid's Corner new summer recreation program that the park board reviewed and approved in February was extended to 5:30 daily at the recommendation of the board.

7. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

Barone noted that the annual park board tour scheduled for May 6, begins at 5:15 p.m.

8. Adjournment

Gefvert moved and Acomb seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:52 p.m. All voted "Yes." Motion carried.