

**PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on February 13, 2020, at Ramsey City Council Chambers, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW.

Commission Members Present: Chair Shane Bennett
 Vice Chair Brandon Sis
 Commissioner Trixy Barnes
 Commissioner Nathan Barten
 Commissioner Jennifer Leistico

Commission Members Absent: Commissioner Russell Bayer

Also Present: City Council Liaison Debra Musgrove
 Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
 Recreation Specialist Abby Proulx

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bennett called the Park and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Commissioner Barnes, seconded by Commissioner Barten, to approve the Park and Recreation Commission meeting agenda as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Barnes, Barten, Leistico, Sis. Voting No: None. Absent: Bayer.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Leistico, seconded by Commissioner Sis, to approve the January 9, 2020, Park and Rec Commission meeting minutes as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Leistico, Sis, Barnes, Barten. Voting No: None. Absent: Bayer.

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.01: Affirm 2019 Photo Contest Winners

Recreation Specialist Abby Proulx presented a brief overview of each of the photo submissions for the four categories. Chase Ulrick's photo "Golden Sunset" was the grand prize winner.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted that the photo "Golden Sunset" rose to the top in part because due to its beautiful highlighting of the agricultural background and the concept emerging from resident's involvement in the Comprehensive Plan of balancing Ramsey's rural character and growth.

Motion by Commissioner Sis, seconded by Commissioner Barnes, to affirm the 2019 Photo Contest Winners.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Sis, Barnes, Bayer, Leistico. Voting No: None. Absent: Bayer.

5.04: Approve Goals and Strategies Section of Chapter 3 of the PSP – Recreation Programming & Partnerships

Recreation Specialist Abby Proulx stated she has continued to work on the Recreation Programming part of the plan. She presented 5 strategic action plan elements including: promote economic growth and development; seek public and private partnerships; improve and maintain the safety of the community; strengthen Ramsey's identity and brand; enhance community engagement. The next section highlights 5 aspects from the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Elements: a balance of rural and urban character; an active community; a connected community; a smart, citizen-focused government; a financially stable system. She then presented 8 recreation goals and strategies including: offer a diversity of recreational opportunities; create and maintain synergistic partnerships; ensure pertinent programming opportunities for all ages; ensure equitable access to recreation programs; encourage and active and healthy community; create a positive economic impact; incorporate a diversity of art and culture into recreation; and utilize existing infrastructure.

Commissioner Leistico thanked staff and stated this has been one of the clearest sections of the PSP. She appreciated the emphasis on community connectivity.

City Council Liaison Musgrove indicated that City Council Liaison Nadine Heinrich previously provided some feedback on the plan, and she had shared it with Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood.

City Council Liaison Musgrove indicated that because the comments are quite significant, she would rather let them speak for themselves and let each Commissioner receive a copy of it.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood indicated he did share that list of feedback with Recreation Specialist Proulx and staff reviewed it together. Some of the comments from City Council Liaison Henrich were grammatical in nature. Those were taken into account and the attachment to this case reflects most of those changes were made.

City Council Liaison Musgrove asked about the timeline of preparation of this chapter.

Recreation Specialist Proulx stated staff has been presenting the chapter in sections. Back in November, it was an overall outline. At last the last Commission meeting, the first 3 chapters were introduced, and tonight this section is being introduced. The following meeting, ideally, will introduce the final 2 chapters. Then more detailed discussion will follow.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood added that the goal is to finish this chapter, and noted that there is a lot of detail and scope in here. With respect to the goals and strategies, those are reflective of the Council's work on the strategic plan and the Comp Plan. He noted the focus has been on the Recreation chapter because Council has been interested in some of the programming aspects. The timeline is getting that done as soon as possible.

City Council Liaison Musgrove commented this is an overview with big picture. She thinks goals should be measurable and objective. She thinks these goals are wordy and difficult to measure.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded, that the Park System Plan includes the broad aspects and theory of the park system and recreation planning. At the Council level, if there is a desire to have measurables, that would be appropriate for the Council to direct staff in that way. He cited one example notated in the plan called the Day at the Farm, which was a day wherein the City partnered with Pearson family to have a day of activities. That was a successful event. The City had very little input in the event, and the business reaped many benefits.

Commissioner Sis commented on the goals, specifically that he would support letting staff keep it more subjective, just in terms of an overall plan and an overall direction. When it comes to creating an action plan year over year, that is where the actual information could be included. There are not enough data points yet to project things out.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood thanked the Commission for the feedback.

5.02: Identify Work Plan for the Proposed 2020 Parks' Capital Improvements

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan. It is a big picture view of things staff sees coming as well as requests from residents regarding parks and facilities. A significant, ongoing part of this is working with the athletic associations. All things parks and trails are included in the CIP. The City maintains a 10-year plan that attempts to forecast water lines, roads, buildings, facilities, parks and trails and more. Before the Commission tonight are only those projects intended to land in 2020.

He presented Elmcrest Park & The Draw Entrances and Signs as part of the CIP. Staff is ready to move forward on this, as signing guidelines and design standards have been established. He then briefly discussed Observation Boardwalk - Lake Itasca; the Observation Deck East on the Mississippi E of Dolomite; Trail Connections; Park Development in The COR; Bark Park Shelter – Alpine Park; Northfork North Trail Connection; Amphitheater Lighting; Aeration for Sunfish Lake and The Draw; Lake Itasca – Parking, Trail, and Canoe System.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood then provided a little more background about the possible creation/expansion of Bark Park Shelter at Alpine Park, including artificial turf and a shelter which would allow patrons to wipe the paws of animals under the shelter.

Sue Brockman, 15631 Ramsey Blvd NW, stated she has started using the dog park regularly for about the last six months. In that time, she has observed that it is a highly used off-leash park. The proposed expansion would provide a second entrance to the park and also spread out the 30-40 dogs where it is very congested. Fencing would also be very helpful. A lot of users like to walk the perimeter of the park.

Chair Bennett asked if Ms. Brockman had any other ideas not already addressed in the presentation tonight.

Ms. Brockman indicated one other issue not addressed is lighting.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood indicated he has not had a chance to price out fencing, but it would likely be several thousand dollars. He also discussed lighting options and indicated staff can bring back more of a cogent plan for the Commission to explore.

Chair Bennett asked whether other people have inquired about a dog park in a different area in the City.

Ms. Brockman indicated she has not heard that. The park, however, is used by other people who are not residents of Ramsey, and this is a nice location.

Chair Bennett asked whether Ms. Brockman has heard requests for a section cordoned off within the dog park, to preventing mixing of the large breeds with the small breeds.

Ms. Brockman stated one person has asked her about large dog vs. small dog. She has not heard a lot of feedback in that area. So far it is a nice blend of large and small breeds.

Chair Bennett stated there is always a number of dogs at this park, and there are people who walk outside the park. The City has certainly heard this desire for expansion.

City Council Liaison Musgrove asked about zoning concerns.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded he does not know that there is any applicable zoning. However, finding an off-leash siting can be difficult. When they are proposed close to residential properties, people tend to have concerns. The staff did a complex matrix when the City went to find a location for the dog park. Expansion rather than developing a new one might be worth the money. Residents tend to have concerns about loose dogs and noise and traffic from people outside the area. They are also concerned with dog waste with respect to groundwater impacts. Alpine Park has worked well, with no significant runoff to streams. The siting of that worked out well.

City Council Liaison Musgrove stated she likes Alpine; it is one of the best active parks in the City. She also asked about a separate entrance.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded the existing dog park is a pyramid shape. What is being proposed is using the back side of the westerly ballfields and the landfill's northern fence. There will be an entrance near the soccer field. On the existing outfield fences, those two gates would remain and one more would be added under Ms. Brockman's proposal.

City Council Liaison Musgrove stated she would have concerns with an entrance on that side that is not doubled.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded that is certainly a possibility.

City Council Liaison Musgrove stated a double exit is important with that second entrance. She does like the idea of having it extended, as it goes with the park.

Chair Bennett expressed agreement. If there is a second entrance, there should be a "dog trap," to provide a safety buffer. The existing fences will help leverage this project, though there will still be significant fencing and gate costs.

Ms. Brockman stated a double gate would be great.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated these projects will come back for Commission input and project development.

5.03: Advance the Ford Brook Playground Renovation Project

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated the Commission has looked at this project a few times already. A Listening Session with the neighbors was held in May 2019. The plan calls for the existing playground equipment to be removed and turf to be installed in that area. The playground would be moved closer to the center/south park of the park, and the playground would also become ADA-compliant. Also proposed is a sheltered picnic area. The table and bench would be made out of recycled plastics. The playground would be relocated from a nearby regional park that is in fantastic condition. There would be separate play

structures for up to age 6 and then ages 6 to 12. Also included is a 4-bay swing and a large articulated balance beam. The draft budget is approximately \$71,000.

Commissioner Barnes stated she has some personal comments as well as residents' comments shared with her. She indicated that this has been defined as a pocket park, which is a small park surrounded by homes. Ford Brook park is not a pocket park; it is a neighborhood park. It should serve as a focal point of the community. Forty years ago, Ford Brook received used equipment from the City of Minneapolis. Now, this park will be updated with used equipment from an Anoka park. A look should be taken as to whether Ramsey should continually provide its citizens with second-hand equipment in its parks. As one citizen commented to her: if that is true, watch property values plummet. Going forward, the City should focus not on The COR, but rather on the Rest of Ramsey (ROR) where the citizens of Ramsey have chosen to build homes and raise families. Signage change is nice, but it should only be the beginning.

Chair Bennett thanked Commissioner Barnes for input. He also asked to clarify whether the estimated cost of the used equipment and installation is \$21,000.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that figure, noting that the equipment is \$5,000, and the balance is installation and all new fasteners as required.

Chair Bennett asked about projected cost if all new equipment, with the upgrades the neighborhood would like, were purchased.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded there are comps included in the packet. The play equipment itself (not the rest of the park) would be \$100,000-\$130,000 plus installation of over 15 to 25% of that cost. Thus, it would be approximately \$150,000 for comparable play equipment.

Chair Bennett appreciated Commissioner Barnes' input. He wishes new equipment could be placed everywhere in the city. Financially that is a challenge. This is a unique opportunity. The alternative here is the removal for the safety concerns and the potential risk of not having a park there at all. This is a creative solution for the City to provide the neighborhood the amenities they wanted in a unique way. The original placeholder in the CIP was around \$60,000.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood concurred the CIP showed \$50,000 plus \$20,000 from the city of Nowthen. He also noted that Ford Brook is a neighborhood park, not a pocket park.

Commissioner Barnes clarified she is not saying the used equipment should not be installed. Rather, if the County of Anoka can replace new equipment, surely Ramsey can provide new equipment going forward. This should not be the standard.

Chair Bennett stated the parks developed in the City over the last few years have all had new equipment. There are some aging parks in the City, and the alternative is how to continue to update and maintain the equipment. Those are challenges that will be faced over the next several years.

Commissioner Sis stated the question is whether to do something or to de-commission the park. Doing something is the preferable option. In the case of Ford Brook, it is a park situated in the middle of the community, as was the old style. Some newer neighborhoods being planned are now being built without parks. Having refurbished second hand equipment is certainly an improvement over the existing structure.

Commissioner Leistico indicated she would not want to make it a policy of always giving used equipment to Ramsey parks, though in this case it is a good choice. She also thinks it appears wasteful of Anoka County to upgrade their equipment when it is in such good condition, but that is another matter entirely.

Commissioner Barnes re-stated citizens are very concerned about this.

Commissioner Leistico asked if people are upset because Ramsey is redirecting money away from parks and putting it into The COR.

Commissioner Barnes responded that yes, putting it into The COR and ignoring neighborhoods. If the goal is to balance the rural character with the urban, she asked whether the City wants to promote apartment complexes and high-density housing, when most of the people who move to Ramsey want that rural character. They are not looking for that high-density area. The City needs to consider its priorities for the Rest of Ramsey (ROR) rather than The COR.

Chair Bennett noted that is a fair challenge. However, in looking at the parks plan just presented, there is one item on park development in The COR, there is amphitheater lighting, one item on signage and the rest of the projects are all trail connections, boardwalks observation deck, bark park, trails, etc. in the rest of Ramsey. He wants the people viewing the meeting at home to understand that the Commission has prioritized projects across the City. There is a perception that a lot of money has gone into The COR. That is largely true because of the amount of development within The COR, but the Commission needs to correct the narrative about what's been done more broadly.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that he likewise was shocked at Anoka County's removal of the play equipment. It is in like new condition. Anything that would be purchased new would look just like this. He was stunned they were removing it, but apparently it has had very little use. The neighborhood had mentioned a desire for rock climbing at Ford Brook. He presented a \$20,000 resin/plastic-type rock-climbing wall. He noted however, it will always look like a big plastic rock. An alternative would be granite/limestone. Those are beautiful and durable but not cheap. The rock could also be repurposed in any number of ways at some point in the future if it was no longer desired. A climbing element would have to increase the budget.

Chair Bennett stated this would be a dramatic improvement for this park plus it would be new and different, especially with what is being proposed with the current equipment. But \$20,000 is a pretty significant upgrade as well.

Commissioner Sis concurred. The intended audience is definitely the neighborhood and not necessarily the broader community, as there are only going to be a limited number of parking spaces. If it was going to be a destination park with unique elements, the Commission could consider it. But as it is right now, it could not be worth it to add something like the rock wall.

Chair Bennett asked about adding a rock wall or another feature down the road.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood indicated it would not be difficult to add another installation down the road. There are, however, some efficiencies and economies of scale of doing it all at once. He would recommend considering it or not considering it, rather than thinking about it as a future item. With regards to being a destination, he does not know that the climbing element would make it a destination insofar as a couple or dozen cars at most. Rather, this would make it a unique element for the neighborhood but also the people who like to go on play dates at different parks.

Commissioner Sis noted the border of boulders. Daycare providers have commented that little ones tend to climb on them and fall off.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood indicated that the boulders stand the test of time. They look great, and get banged into by maintenance equipment and still stand up. About 30-40% of the play is just children enjoying rock hopping. A lot of play occurs on those stones. They did check with the League of Minnesota Cities, and it is a perfectly appropriate border. Staff can look at other alternatives, if needed.

Commissioner Sis stated he does not have a problem with them if they have been looked into it.

Commissioner Barnes stated she would much prefer real stone rather than the resin stone. The handholds can be replaced on the real stone.

City Council Liaison Musgrove asked if the staff is recommending the rock climbing or if the residents are asking for it.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood indicated a resident suggested it at the listening session on May 19th.

Chair Bennett asked for a motion with a not to exceed amount, with or without the rock-climbing elements.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted he would prefer a not to exceed figure of \$75,000 or \$95,000 rather than the \$71,000 (or \$91,000 with rock climbing) listed, as in reviewing the line item budget, a few items are going to be very tight.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted that if the Commission recommends a budget, he would immediately bring this to Council and hopefully have it in place by the time children are out of school this year.

Commissioner Barten asked if the benches in the photos are to be included.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood responded he does not know. In the proposal, that was not included. He will try, but he does not know for sure. That also relates to the stone components along the border, and relates to the contingency as well. He concurred there should be a bench.

Commissioner Barnes suggested a motion should be made to include the rock-climbing wall.

Commissioner Sis indicated he would prefer \$75,000 budget and a minimalist approach.

Commissioner Leistico concurred, based upon the residents' feedback.

Commissioner Sis added that the residents did put forward a wish list, but there was not the sentiment that every element was necessary for a new park. Having a play structure will likely meet or exceed the expectations of the residents.

Motion by Commissioner Sis, seconded by Commissioner Leistico, to recommend the 2020 Ford Brook Park playground renovation with a not-to-exceed amount of \$75,000.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Sis, Leistico. Voting No: Barnes and Barten. Absent: Bayer.

5.05: Update Policy for Naming Public Facilities

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the history of the City's naming policy, which has been in place since 1991. In 2009, the City created a policy for named items like benches. In 2018, the Commission was asked to look at the park naming policy once more. The Commission reviewed it, and it was suggested that an application method be used. That was a favorable outcome of that discussion. Staff has since clarified a few things on the policy and cleaned it up a bit, and the draft policy is stated within the text of the sample Resolution.

Chair Bennett stated this is in line with the Commission's earlier discussions.

Commissioner Sis concurred.

Motion by Commissioner Barten, seconded by Commissioner Sis, to approve the draft Resolution Adopting the Park and Recreation Commission's Public Facility Naming Policy.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Barten, Sis, Leistico, Barnes. Voting No: None. Absent: Bayer.

6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood highlighted the potential March Commission meeting agenda, including the Alpine Park proposal and an update on the Park System Plan. Also on the agenda in March or April will be the summer outdoor meeting schedule. He asked for Commission suggestions on locations.

Chair Bennett stated there continues to be one open seat on the Commission. The posting is now closed.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood indicated the interviews will be held by the Council in March with appointments to begin in April.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood there have been complaints about residents not cleaning up after their dogs. Also, the usage trend at both ice rinks continues to decline.

Chair Bennett thanked City Council Liaison Musgrove for sitting in for Councilmember Heinrich this evening.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Sis, seconded by Commissioner Leistico, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Sis, Leistico, Barnes, Barten. Voting No: None. Absent: Bayer.

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Riverblood
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Allison Burr
TimeSaver off Site Secretarial, Inc.