

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on September 10, 2020, at the Pearson Park, 15070 Rabbit Street NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Commission Members Present:      Chair Shane Bennett  
   Vice Chair Brandon Sis  
   Commissioner Nathan Barten  
   Commissioner Russell Bayer  
   Commissioner Matthew Guck  
   Commissioner Jennifer Leistico  
   Commissioner Justin Loss

Commission Members Absent:      None

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

**1.      CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Bennett called the Park and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

**2.      CITIZEN INPUT**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided the Commission with written correspondence received from resident Glen Semanko related to the Central Park pickleball/tennis courts. It was noted that the written correspondence will become a part of the record for tonight's meeting.

**3.      APPROVE AGENDA**

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

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

**4.      APPROVE MINUTES**

**4.01:    Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes**

Motion by Commissioner Leistico, seconded by Commissioner Barten, to approve the following Park and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting Minutes:

- Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes dated July 9, 2020.

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

## **5. COMMISSION BUSINESS**

### **5.01: Receive Status Report on the Bluebird Recovery Program**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood introduced resident and Master Naturalist Carlyn Erion to provide an update on the Bluebird Recovery Program.

Carlyn Erion, Blue Bird Recovery Program, stated that in March she presented the program to the Commission and proposed a Bluebird Recovery Seminar for Earth Day. She stated that the seminar was videotaped and encouraged the Commission members to watch the video if they have not yet done so. She stated that two residents watched the March Park and Recreation Commission meeting and contacted City staff to get involved in the program. She reported that David constructed 15 bluebird houses to replace the dilapidated houses. She stated that new bluebird houses were placed between Armstrong and Variolite along Alpine by herself and another volunteer. She stated that the Bluebird Recovery Program also donated five bluebird houses. She noted that the houses were placed late, therefore documentation of nesting successes could not be properly documented. She provided an update on the nesting that has occurred in those houses since that time. She stated that they are working on an installation date for Rivers' Bend Park this fall, noting that they have marked the placement for the houses within the park. She stated that she continues to look for volunteers or additional ways to create interest by residents or service groups.

Chair Bennett thanked Ms. Erion and the residents that volunteered their time and donated their time. He stated that hopefully they can create additional interest and gain additional volunteers.

### **5.02: Recommend an Exploration of Options and Alternatives to Turfgrass in Public Spaces**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood presented plans to explore options and alternatives to turfgrass and mowing in some of the park locations. He noted that staff will continue to brief the Commission as options are explored and results are compared.

Commissioner Guck asked if staff has looked into the possibility of receiving funds through the DNR for this type of project.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the first phase will be an examination of the hard costs while the second phase would focus on implementation. He confirmed that staff could look into grant options for the second phase.

Chair Bennett stated that he appreciates the approach in attempting to determine the value of the alternatives. He noted that education will be an important element to ensure that visitors are aware that is how the area is supposed to look, and that it is not undermaintained.

Commissioner Barten asked if staff will be analyzing the impact of the growth inhibitors along with the different types of plantings.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that to be true and noted that he would look for the Commission to help in that analysis. He stated that Elmcrest Park will be used for side by side comparison to ensure that it is a true comparison. He stated that he will be obtaining quotes from the contractor for that service and provided details on the application schedule which would begin in May 2021. He believed that additional funds and staff time could possibly be identified through best practices well.

Vice Chair Sis asked if any other communities have done activities of this nature.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that Minneapolis implemented some of these no-mow alternatives in the past and believed that was considered a success in the end, although there were negative comments along the way. He agreed that education and signage would be an important element of implementation, should this move forward.

Chair Bennett commented that perhaps this will be embraced by the community and its desire to maintain its rural character.

Councilmember Musgrove agreed that education would be an important component in the public embracing this type of activity. She asked for thoughts on no-mow grass rather than non-mowed areas that use prairie grass and other things that require maintenance.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood explained that they hope to identify short-term and long-term costs for each of the alternatives. He noted that while many of the alternatives will not be cost-effective in the first one or two years, they would provide a long-term cost-savings.

Motion by Vice Chair Sis, seconded by Commissioner Guck to proceed as discussed and proposed by staff.

Further discussion: Brian Walker stated that he has been a turf grass manager for 30 years and in his experience, growth regulators help to create a healthy turf that requires less maintenance. Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that all elements including staff time, administration, equipment, etc. will be considered in the cost analysis that will be completed.

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

## **6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided a highlight of recreational programming, noting that the city has been doing a great job in expanding options for all demographics. He advised of the upcoming *Happy Daze* activities.

Commissioner Barten commented that he always values the more natural areas in the park and noted that this idea could help to teach children that the more natural areas are valuable and should be respected.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that any of the parks that have natural areas tend to draw interest from children and teach them about the natural world.

Councilmember Musgrove thanked staff, as this was an idea brought forward during the Council budget discussions.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Loss, seconded by Commissioner Lestico to adjourn the meeting.

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

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mark Riverblood  
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*

## **CITIZEN INPUT COMMENTS**

-----Original Message-----  
From: Glen Semanko <[glensemanko@yahoo.com](mailto:glensemanko@yahoo.com)>  
Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 9:43 PM  
To: Mark Riverblood <[mriverrblood@ci.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:mriverrblood@ci.ramsey.mn.us)>  
Subject: Central Park pickle ball/tennis courts

Mark,  
Thank you for talking to me earlier today (Sept 8) about the courts at Central Park. As a former tennis player (when I was younger), I appreciate good tennis courts just as much as I do good pickle ball (my current activity of choice) courts. Having used all 4 courts at Central Park multiple times a week during

the last few years, it is obvious that those courts are in great need of repair/replacement. The top layer of material has bubbled, worn away, cracked, been literally pulled up, etc. in several spots.

Being at the park at various times for pickle ball, plus simply riding my bike thru and by Central Park almost daily, very, very rarely is more than 1 tennis court used. Most days when we use the courts for pickle ball, we have enough people to occupy 3 or 4 pickle ball courts, which we currently set up on the 2 tennis courts on the east side of the 4 courts. Having seen some of the pickle ball facilities in neighboring communities, it would seem reasonable to have 2 tennis courts and 4 pickle ball courts within the footprint of the existing tennis courts.

Yes, pickle ball is associated with senior citizens, but our group frequently includes 10 & 13 year old grandsons of one of our couples, plus occasional visits from other teenagers and people in their 20's and 30's. As a member of a group of 30+ people who play pickle ball there regularly (MWF mornings + a few late afternoons each week because some of the players are still working), we would certainly appreciate the Ramsey Parks Commission & Department taking a serious look at making long-lasting improvements with the Central Park Courts.

As an unrelated side-note, it gives me great joy to see what a gem Central Park has become. I was a coach/parent 30-40 years ago when it was an infant park with below average ball fields and limited facilities. Many of us spent more than a few Saturdays with shovels and rakes trying to get some of the fields established. Hopefully the tennis/pickle ball courts can be improved to the level of the wonderful ball fields.

Thank you for allowing me to give my input.

Glen Semanko

6311 169th Lane NW (since 1978)

Sent from my iPad