

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on April 8, 2021, at the Park Center Building, Central Park, 7925 161st Avenue NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Commission Members Present: Chair Shane Bennett
 Vice Chair Brandon Sis
 Commissioner Nathan Barten
 Commissioner Jennifer Leistico
 Commissioner Justin Loss
 Commissioner Dean Olson
 Commissioner Brian Walker

Commission Members Absent:

Also Present: City Council Liaison Ryan Heineman
 City Councilmember 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 6:32 p.m.

Chair Bennett welcomed the two new members of the Commission, Dean Olson, and Brian Walker.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

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

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

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

- Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes dated March 11, 2021.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Barten, Leistico, Loss, Olson, Sis. Voting No: None. Absent: None. Abstain: Commissioner Walker.

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.01: Consider Park and Recreation 2021 Outdoor Meeting Schedule

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that the Commission typically meets outdoors in various parks for the months of May through September or October. He stated that the group can decide the various locations and reviewed the suggestions included in the staff report.

Chair Barten commented that the suggestions feel appropriate based on the work occurring in those parks at those times. He welcomed input for the June meeting and the Commission provided input on some smaller parks.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that Rabbit Park could be a good fit for the June meeting and the Commission agreed.

Chair Barten asked if the Commission would also like to select an October location and it was the consensus of the Commission that the group would plan to meet at City Hall for October as there were issues with daylight when the October meeting was held outdoors the previous year.

Motion by Commissioner Loss, seconded by Commissioner Barten to approve the 2021 outdoor meeting locations as presented adding Rabbit Park for June.

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

5.02: Options and Alternatives for Maintaining Turfgrass in Public Spaces

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that at the September meeting in Pearson Park the group discussed the costs of maintaining turfgrass and alternatives and the Commission agreed to look at alternatives when possible and look to convert areas that are hard to maintain from turfgrass to alternative landscapes. He stated that an experiment will be completed at Elmcrest Park, dividing a field in half, and applying plant growth regulators to one half of the field and assess the mowing needs each week for both halves of the field along with the turf qualities. He stated that this would allow the City to gather information on the mowing needs, turf quality and costs.

Commissioner Walker asked if the cost for the five applications includes the labor costs for the contractor.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that cost includes the work of the contractor. He commented that he does not have staff with the appropriate licensing or knowledge to apply that product. He commented that these are the known costs, and the unknown costs would be if there is a savings in mowing time.

Commissioner Sis asked if the contractor has a frequently asked questions brochure available related to application.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that information is available along with the EPA determination on the safety of the product.

Councilmember Musgrove asked who would be responsible for tracking this information.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that he, the Parks Supervisor, and the Lead Person will monitor and track that data.

Commissioner Loss asked if both halves would be treated if the experiment is successful.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that they will review the data, any cost savings, and then determine the appropriate application for the product, whether it is park specific or more appropriate for different soil types.

Commissioner Walker commented that regulators are also helpful in areas that are hard to mow such as areas around trees and buildings, which could provide additional cost and time savings.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood agreed that a lot of time is spent weed whipping around certain elements because of cultural practices. He stated that they are continuing to work on policies that help to guide the use of time and resources. He commented that they use seasonal workers for mowing and that can cause difficulties for establishing and following those processes. He stated that this work will help to create the policies that provide that guidance for seasonal workers.

Commissioner Barten commented that he read all 30 pages of the Rivers' Bend Park management plan today and was impressed and excited. He advocated for more of that as much as possible system wide and to include areas mentioned by Commissioner Walker, around trees and buildings. He commented that PGR's are a huge step forward environmentally, but he still thinks that the ultimate goal would be to have zero environmental impact and would like the group to keep that in mind. He agreed that PGR's can be a big step forward but still wanted the City and Commission to continue to look for alternate management practices. He believed that community members should switch to, or add, clover to their yard as it can crowd out noxious weeds and uses less water. He commented that PGR use is a net positive but wants to continue to move towards the ultimate goal.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that personally he agrees with those statements. He stated that those were great statements and noted that public education would be a key component. He stated that currently they are spending money and contributing to pollution to maintain areas that serve little purpose, referencing an area that could be better served by wildflower planting. He recognized that residents have varying opinions on turf maintenance.

Commissioner Barten commended staff for the scientific approach to this process at Elmcrest Park.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that there are regulations within homeowners associations and therefore the City should recognize the difference between private, public, and association properties. She agreed that education would be a key component to whatever is done.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that almost all the townhome developments use municipal water. He stated that if a townhome association wanted to reduce an area with irrigation, they could look towards the park plan as to how they could do that. He stated that for new developments, perhaps some regulations could be relaxed in exchange for more natural areas that require less irrigation and maintenance.

Councilmember Heineman commented that it would be great to use this as a learning experience and share the details with the public as an educational experience.

Chair Bennett agreed that the City cannot control everything, but they can control the City properties. He stated that this experiment will help to identify the cost benefit and noted that there are also other environmental benefits. He stated that there are practices that could be implemented by the City that could provide a cost savings and reduce the impacts on the environment. He stated that he loves the concept of including an educational component for the public.

Commissioner Loss commented that it would be great to have signs available to educate the public as well.

Commissioner Barten commented that even on small areas, prairie grass can help to introduce new species to the area.

6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the recreation programs planned were included in the Commission packet. He stated that the Art Fair is planned for July and encouraged the Commission to spread the word to artists that may be interested. He stated that the Recreation Specialist left for a new position and the City hopes to have a new employee on board in June.

Commissioner Loss commented that he noticed fencing going up at Alpine for the dog park. He asked for details on where the entrance gate would be located.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted that past cases included the layout and provided additional details on the expansion and gate locations.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if The Draw Concert Series is listed on the City website and whether it would be shown on the monument sign.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that he would assume that information is, or will be, available on the website.

Chair Bennett commented that he did notice a post on the City Facebook page.

Commissioner Leistico asked for details on how the gap would be filled from the Recreation Specialist leaving.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided details on how the gap will attempt to be filled until the new employee comes on board, using a temporary intern.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

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

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Riverblood
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.