

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on July 8, 2021, at The Draw Park and Amphitheater, 7401 Ramsey Parkway NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

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

Commissioners Absent:      Commissioner Justin Loss

Also Present:      City Council Liaison Ryan Heineman  
                                 Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood  
                                 Recreation Specialist Kayleigh Sonterre

**1.      CALL TO ORDER**

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

**2.      CITIZEN INPUT**

None.

**3.      APPROVE AGENDA**

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

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chair Bennett; Commissioners Sis, Barten, Leistico, Loss, Olson, 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 Olson, to approve the following Park and Recreation Commission Regular Meeting Minutes:

- Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes dated April 8, 2021

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

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

- Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes dated June 10, 2021

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

## **5. COMMISSION BUSINESS**

### **5.01: Playground Replacement Policy**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that this is a continuation from the discussion at the previous meeting. He stated that this draft is at about 90 percent complete and following tonight's meeting would add the finishing touches and hope to bring the final draft forward to the Commission for consideration at the August meeting and then to the City Council. He highlighted some of the changes that were made to the policy based on the discussion at the last meeting.

Commissioner Barten asked if Titterud Park was considered a neighborhood or community park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that it would be considered a neighborhood park. He stated that typically a community park includes things like athletic fields and other features, usually at least 40 acres in size and used for community events. He provided details on the public engagement process that would use mailed notice and email survey to solicit feedback. He noted that perhaps the Commission would also hold a meeting at that park before planning improvements as well. He reviewed some of the alternative actions that could be considered if a neighborhood park does not merit replacement. He reviewed the scoring system that would be used for park evaluations and reviewed potential rankings using that system. He noted that while Rabbit Park scores for replacement, it may not merit full replacement but could use some improvements. He explained that this policy would be used to support recommendations for replacement, removal, or improvement to playground.

Commissioner Sis stated that there are a few parks that would appear to score higher for density than they should and perhaps that indicator should be adjusted.

Commissioner Leistico asked if there is a net estimate on the number of children per 35 homes.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood estimated that two out of three homes perhaps have two children. He noted that the City can query the School District to ask the number of children within a certain age range in a specific area. He stated that would be part of the work

that is put into the consideration for whether a playground should be replaced, improved, or removed.

Commissioner Walker commented that the data from the school would provide a more realistic number than estimating children per household.

Chair Bennett agreed that perhaps there is more of a range for density and if that density falls within a certain range, then the school information is requested.

Commissioner Walker stated that he would suggest using the age group of 12 and under rather than the density estimate.

Councilmember Heineman commented that he agrees that additional information would be helpful. He noted that perhaps density is made its own matrix with the school data and density estimates in order to provide a more accurate projection.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that he likes that concept. He noted that he would suggest a preliminary screening that would trigger the school survey information. He noted number seven related to accessibility versus trails. He stated that sometimes density may be met but the survey is still completed as it does not appear the area is heavily populated with children.

Chair Bennett stated that if a playground is going to be removed it would be helpful to have the information related to housing density, trail connections, and school data.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood agreed that it will be helpful to have the policy and data in order to support decisions of that nature. He commented that sometimes there are not sufficient children in an area to warrant a \$100,000 investment in a neighborhood park.

Councilmember Heineman stated that if a playground is removed, would there be continued discussion as to what would happen with the park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that would be part of the discussion.

Chair Bennett stated that perhaps within the policy there should be some suggestions of what could occur if a playground is removed.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that he plans to add additional detail to that section. He noted that there should be some flexibility as some parks simply do not warrant improvements.

Commissioner Walker commented that there is a park on Variolite that appears to be used for parking construction vehicles.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that when that area was developed the lots were five to ten acres and that area was used as a horse arena. He commented that the land is dedicated park land but the highest and best use at this time is as a brush drop off site or for construction vehicle use. He continued to review the other elements of the plan including definitions and timing.

Chair Bennett commented that perhaps the timing is stated as an example as funding may not always be available or perhaps the park does not require replacement at that time.

Commissioner Leistico asked for input on the safety concern category.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that he will be clarifying the differences between safety concerns versus aesthetic issues. He noted that playgrounds receive inspections twice per week during the summer months and once per week in the off season.

Commissioner Sis commented that this is a good framework that would guide discussion. He stated that the Commission would retain the ability to have that discussion and make the decision but agreed that this would be a good framework to work off.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that perhaps the Commission recommend that the Council consider this policy as a working draft. He stated that the policy could be revisited after the first playground or two.

Chair Bennett agreed that would make sense, especially as Rabbit will most likely be the first park on the list.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that first park could be used for the appendix to show how the policy works.

Chair Bennett commented that it will be helpful to have a policy to use as a base and help to remove some of the emotion.

Councilmember Heineman commented that Titterud is a great park, but he has never seen the sports fields used. He asked if something could be added stating that there would be an additional section added that could provide examples of what would be done if a playground is removed. He noted that having some of those alternatives will help to remove some of that emotion.

Chair Bennett noted that some of those alternatives could be listed in section five. He stated that Commissioner Barten referenced the Ford Brook is not shown on the map.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood acknowledged that this is a draft, and some locations still need to be added. It was confirmed that staff will bring this back to the Commission in August.

## **5.02: Consider Process for Refurbishing the 25-year-old Lake Itasca Boardwalk**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the boardwalk has served the community well for the past 25 years and is well loved. He stated that the boardwalk now needs to be replaced and he would propose an RFP that would identify how the boardwalk should be refurbished and obtain proposals for that replacement. He stated that if approved by the Commission, staff would bring this forward to the Public Works Committee for consideration. He stated that ideally, he would like to see the replacement occur this winter.

Councilmember Heineman asked if the cost estimate is based on today's lumber prices or next year's lumber prices. He asked the urgency of the project and whether it could wait until lumber prices come back down.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that in the cost for lumber today, the cost could be approximately \$140,000. He noted that he would structure the window for the RFP to be the entire winter which would provide an opportunity for better sourcing and costs.

Councilmember Heineman asked if the existing pilings would be reused.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that there are areas of the boardwalk that have not shifted at all and therefore a deck—over could be done with expanded width. He stated that if the existing boardwalk were to be entirely removed, that could add an additional \$10,000 to \$20,000.

Commissioner Walker asked if it would make sense to increase the width from six feet to ten feet rather than eight feet if it is this well used.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that staff believes that eight feet would be sufficient and if that width is expanded to ten feet that would increase the cost significantly. He noted that ten-foot width would also not be supported by the existing frame/boardwalk in terms of the deck over method. He noted that the additional width could be included as an alternate. He commented that he received zero complaints on the width of the eight-foot boardwalks but has received comments related to the six-foot width.

Chair Bennett agreed that it would be helpful to include the ten-foot alternate for review purposes.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the benefits to winter construction for this type of project.

Commissioner Sis asked if there are enough boardwalks in the City to package those together with one contractor for maintenance purposes in order to obtain a cost savings.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that there are other boardwalks that need maintenance but not to this scale and therefore he would propose to use this one as the first test. He stated that if the process goes well, with good pricing, that concept could be considered going forward. He stated that while it is helpful to have a contractor on board, it can be helpful to bid the project in order to continue to obtain better pricing.

Motion by Commissioner Barten, seconded by Commissioner Sis to direct staff to proceed with development and issuance of an RFP for the proposed refurbishment of the Lake Itasca Boardwalk at both eight and ten feet in width.

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

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

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that staff received a resident letter stating that residents are using Alpine Park. He stated that he included a snapshot of the development rates and charges following a discussion the previous month. He introduced a new staff member monitoring City events and doing a great job in her first five or six weeks.

Recreation Specialist Kayleigh Sonterre highlighted some upcoming City events.

Chair Bennett commented that he coaches youth baseball and has noticed that there are always people using the pickleball courts. He noted that was a great investment in the park.

Commissioner Olson stated that the brown Central Park street sign on Armstrong is 18x18 and easy to drive by. He asked if a larger sign could be added to better alert drivers.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that the signs are 18x24 and follow the uniform sign manual from MnDOT. He stated that he could investigate the possibility of a larger sign but noted that Central Park also has a large monument sign.

## **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 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mark Riverblood  
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

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