

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on February 10, 2022, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

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

Commission Members Absent:      Commissioner Jennifer Leistico  
   Commissioner Brian Walker

Also Present:                              City Council Liaison Debra Musgrove  
   Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood  
   Recreation Specialist Marla Martinez-Flynn

**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 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, Loss, and Olson. Voting No: None. Absent: Commissioners Leistico and Walker.

**4.      APPROVE MINUTES**

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

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

- Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes dated January 13, 2022

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

## **5. COMMISSION BUSINESS**

### **5.01: 2021 Summer Concert Series Recap**

Recreation Specialist Martinez-Flynn provided a recap of the Summer Concert Series highlighting the different performers and details on each event.

Chair Bennett commented that it was a good season with overall good weather.

Recreation Specialist Martinez-Flynn commented that a flyer was also included highlighted the upcoming 2022 season, noting that all performers have been secured.

Commissioner Sis asked how these attendance numbers compared to previous years.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that the numbers were on par with previous years, although perhaps a bit lower still due to COVID concerns.

Commissioner Loss asked if the City is planning to require registration for attendees.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that voluntary registration was only required in 2020 to ensure COVID protocols could be met.

### **5.02: Affirm 2021 Photo Contest Winners**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that the photos submitted by residents are used in many ways including the website. He stated that all the 2021 photos were included in the Commission packet.

Recreation Specialist Martinez-Flynn reviewed the proposed photo contest winners for the 2021 contest in each of the four categories as well as the grand prize winner.

Chair Bennett commented that it appears there were some new names in the contest, which is great to see.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that this is a great way to connect with the community, noting that she loves seeing the different perspectives of residents.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented on the lack of submissions for the industry and commerce category, noting that staff will be reaching out to some Ramsey businesses to encourage submissions.

Motion by Commissioner Barten, seconded by Commissioner Olson, to affirm the 2021 Photo Contest Winners.

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

### **5.03: Playground Replacement Policy – Formulate Plan for Rabbit Park**

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood recognized the work the Commission has put into the playground replacement policy which has since been adopted. He stated that this discussion will focus on Rabbit Park. He identified the area of homes which were mailed a letter asking residents for input on the park. He noted that of the 91 letters that were sent, only eight responses were received. He stated that five of those comments named some time of playground component, while the three erred towards the preference for the natural side. He provided a photograph of the existing park, which is fairly barren and stark. He stated that the Commission visited the park the previous year and came to consensus on some native plantings to reduce the need for mowing. He noted that there was also a consensus to leave the large slide. He commented that the remainder of the playground equipment is old and replacement parts are no longer available. He stated that for those reasons it is recommended that the playground equipment be removed. He noted that the swings were removed this past year because of the poor condition. He reviewed the different options the Commission could consider for the park.

Chair Bennett welcomed input from the public.

Bowman Family, 8845 176<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, agreed that most of the equipment is in poor condition and is not safe for small children. She commented that having natural habitat would be great for the park as it is currently overrun with sandburs.

Mr. Bowman commented that their family enjoys the large slide and swings and also enjoys climbing features. He agreed that native landscaping and walking trails would be a great addition along with shade trees and benches.

Mrs. Bowman agreed that because there is no shade at the park it is often unusable during the hotter times of the summer.

Mr. Bowman stated that his family loves taking walks to Rabbit Park and would love to see it reworked into something more usable. He stated that there would not need to be a lot of large equipment but perhaps a smaller play concept with walking trails, native landscaping and shade would be great.

Mrs. Bowman commented that there are several families in the neighborhood that have kids with disabilities and therefore having a space with accessible features would be great.

Commissioner Sis commented that currently there are two separate play structures at the park. He stated that it appears one is in worse condition and needs to be removed. He asked if the other structure is in good condition.

Mrs. Bowman agreed that structure is in better condition but also has equipment missing and has experienced vandalism.

Commissioner Sis asked if the resident would prefer to keep that structure or gut the entire area.

Mr. Bowman replied that it would be his preference to remove both structures and replace it with a smaller structure.

Commissioner Sis explained that playground equipment is very expensive, therefore the Commission has to be very considerate of the number of people served by a neighborhood park. He stated that if the one structure is in decent condition, he could support keeping that structure and perhaps adding something as well.

Mrs. Bowman commented that they would leave it to the expertise of the Commission as to whether that equipment can be salvaged.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for input on lighting in the park.

Mrs. Bowman commented that she has never considered lighting for the park. She was unsure how it would impact the neighbors that live next to the park but commented that it could be nice for winter evenings. She was unsure it would be necessary to spend money on lighting.

Chair Bennett commented that he does not recall street lighting in that area, which probably lends itself to vandalism.

Councilmember Musgrove noted resident input for benches.

Mrs. Bowman agreed that it would be nice to have seating, like a bench or picnic table, as the weeds and sandburs prevent sitting on the ground.

Commissioner Olson stated that when the Commission met at the park there was a lot of discussion on the different elements. He stated that perhaps some drought tolerant trees could be considered to provide shade. He agreed that native landscaping would also be a good choice because of the lack of irrigation and opportunity to reduce mowing time.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that there is a wood bench at the park that could be cleaned up and stained. He commented that the picnic table that previously existed was removed because of the fire incident and could be replaced at the park.

Chair Bennett thanked the residents for their input.

Commissioner Barten asked for input on the responses received for the Ford Brook outreach compared to this outreach response.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood estimated that the responses from Ford Brook were about tenfold compared to Rabbit Park, noting that notices were also mailed to less residents for Ford Brook.

Commissioner Loss stated that comparison helps to show the lower usage of Rabbit Park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that prior to the meeting he prepared different budget scenarios for the Commission to review. He stated that after hearing the input tonight, staff can review the condition of the newer structure to determine if it would remain or be refurbished. He reviewed a draft budget outline that would have an estimated cost of \$47,000. He noted that \$100,000 was shown per year in the CIP for playground replacement. He stated that if this scenario is followed, the Commission could most likely address another park this year as well. He displayed photos taken this year from Peltzer Park this year, noting structures that were removed because of safety concerns. He noted that Peltzer Park is in a more central location and is used by more residents than Rabbit Park. He stated that staff has been made aware of an opportunity to secure completely refurbished playground equipment for \$30,000 which could be used in Peltzer Park.

Chair Bennett asked if the equipment was from another local park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that equipment was taken from a park in another community and the vendor is holding the equipment for the Commission to consider as a courtesy but noted that the City is not under obligation to purchase the equipment.

Chair Bennett asked if the other additional play structure would need to be removed from Peltzer Park, or whether that would remain.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that both structures would need to be removed from Peltzer Park. He noted that the refurbished equipment includes a structure for children aged two to five and a second structure for children five to 12. He explained that two separate components are typically provided to avoid conflict between the two age groups.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the equipment would be more appropriate for Peltzer Park because of the number of residents served by that location compared to Rabbit Park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that is the direction he is leaning. He noted that only five responses were received from residents out of the 91 mailings for Rabbit Park. He stated that the Commission could also decide that given the lackluster interest from residents for Rabbit Park, the playground equipment could be removed completely, leaving the slide, and adding native landscaping. He noted that the group could always circle back if there are a lot of comments received from residents on the removed equipment.

Chair Bennett commented that he does like the ability to address two parks this year. He agreed that the big slide should remain at Rabbit Park. He agreed that perhaps additional elements could be added to Rabbit Park in the future if there is desire for that by residents. He noted that perhaps the work at that park begins with native landscaping, trees, and perhaps swings.

Commissioner Sis stated that he would agree with a swing element and retaining the large slide, along with evaluating the second play structure to determine if that could remain. He stated that he does support the taller swing as that provides more opportunity for both older and younger

children. He stated that he would support sending a mailer for Peltzer Park to determine the interest from that neighborhood.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she also agrees with sending a mailer. She stated that when she lived near the park, she noticed a lot of use but was unsure how many children are using the park at this time. She commented that the park is connected to a trail which is a nice feature. She asked if the prairie grass cost would cover the five acres and whether that would include trails. She asked how the future maintenance would be budgeted.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that converting the five acres to native landscaping would have a cost of about \$10,000 and would have about \$3,000 of maintenance over each of the next three years. He believed the maintenance cost would be equal or less to the cost that the City spends on mowing and weed removal for that same period of time. He stated that maintenance is funded through the general fund, while playground replacement can be funded through the lawful gambling fund. He stated that the cost does not include trails but believed that the conversion to native plantings would encourage walking through the park more than the sandbars. He was unsure that there would be a benefit to placing formal paved trails in a five-acre park because of the cost to create and maintain a trail.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she likes the idea that people could go walking through the area as opposed to a bituminous trail.

Commissioner Sis commented that if there is ability to mow a trail, perhaps a neighbor would be willing to adopt a park and mow a trail.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that there was at least one neighbor that responded that was very concerned with those that may come to the park with ill intent and perhaps would be willing to take on the mowing of an informal trail.

Commissioner Loss echoed the comments of Commissioner Sis. He agreed that the one structure could remain if the condition supports that, along with keeping the slide and replacing the swings. He also agreed with sending out a mailer for Peltzer Park.

Commissioner Olson stated that planting native flowers and grasses is a great idea because of the cost savings on mowing and would also improve the aesthetics. He noted that the grass was very crispy when the Commission visited the park.

Chair Bennett stated that it appears there is consensus on the direction for staff to explore those options:

- Rabbit Park: native landscaping, keep the slide, potentially keep the second play structure, and addition of a swing element
- Send mailer for Peltzer Park

Commissioner Barten agreed that leaving caution tape at Peltzer Park is not a desired status. He asked if a park needs to be brought up to ADA standards if any park improvements are made. That was confirmed. He referenced the scenario where some elements remain, and others are added and asked if that would trigger the requirement for ADA compliance for the slide.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that the smaller play equipment would need to be evaluated for ADA compliance. He noted that it may be able to be adapted to ADA compliance. He noted that a crushed granite or limestone trail to the play area would be ADA compliant. He stated that the large slide would never be ADA compliant. He stated that in a playground there needs to be a certain percentage of ADA compliant features but not everything needs to be ADA compliant. He confirmed that staff has the needed direction and advised that he will bring back a budget for Rabbit Park for the Commission to consider at the March meeting and a mailer will be sent for Peltzer Park. He specified that the parks would be considered as separate projects.

Chair Bennett referenced the refurbished equipment and asked if a decision needs to be made sooner rather than later. He stated that they would not want to miss out on that opportunity, noting that even if the equipment is not used at Peltzer, it could be used somewhere else. He stated that based on the rough budget, the Commission should be in a good spot for the budgeted improvement funds for 2022. He stated that perhaps the City continue to pursue that equipment, without waiting for the response of the mailer.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that perhaps the mailer for Peltzer Park should be more limited than was done for Rabbit Park. He stated that the invitation would still provide the ability for residents to provide their own input but should focus on whether the residents support playground replacement.

Chair Bennett agreed that seems like the right approach and will also reduce the burden on future years for replacement if Peltzer could be moved up. He noted that some of the other high priorities are larger parks that will need more funds. He confirmed the consensus of the Commission with that direction.

Commissioner Sis asked if the playground equipment could be stored.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent stated that he will reach out to the vendor to request it be held for another month, as Council approval would still be needed.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that it would be helpful for the Council to have comparison information on the cost savings this refurbished equipment would provide.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood estimated that the same set of equipment new would have a cost of \$80,000 to \$100,000 with additional installation cost. He stated that the price for the refurbished equipment with installation would be less than \$30,000.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that if that could be done for \$30,000 that should go forward to the Council for approval.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed the consensus of the Commission that if the vendor does not want to hold the equipment for another month, staff should move this forward for the City Council to consider.

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

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed upcoming topics for the March and April meetings.

Recreation Specialist Martinez-Flynn provided a highlight of upcoming recreational programming opportunities.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mark Riverblood  
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent

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