

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

The Ramsey Park and Recreation Commission conducted a regular meeting on October 12, 2023, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Commission Members Present: Chair Nathan Barten
 Vice Chair Brandon Sis
 Commissioner Jennifer Leistico
 Commissioner Justin Loss

Commission Members Absent: Commissioner Todd Arts
 Commissioner Shane Bennett
 Commissioner Dean Olson

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

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

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

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes

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 date September 14, 2023

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

5. COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.01: Review Recreation Survey Results

Recreation Coordinator Proulx provided background information on the survey that was completed to better understand the growth of the community, assess the current offerings, identify new opportunities and make informed decisions on future programing. She explained how the survey was developed, the outreach that was completed and how the data was analyzed. She provided additional details on the sample group that completed the survey, noting that a large portion of respondents were families with children. She reviewed information gained on demographics, engagement, current offerings, program interest, and recreation interest. She also summarized some of the other feedback received through this process.

Commissioner Sis asked if staff was surprised with any of the survey results.

Recreation Coordinator Proulx commented that she expected the survey results to be more negative with people complaining and was pleasantly surprised that people were thoughtful and many people were willing to volunteer for events.

Chair Barten commented that a lot of the data is what he would expect, which can be reassuring. He asked if there is something they would look at to more specifically advertise recreational programing.

Commissioner Sis commented that perhaps there are opportunities to work with the communications staff to have things shared on social media as well to build up awareness and build an email list that can help connect with residents.

Recreation Coordinator Proulx commented that word of mouth is also a common way for people to find out about recreational programing opportunities. She confirmed that she is looking at different ways to reach people.

Commissioner Leistico commented that she was also not surprised with the areas people are looking for program. She noted that the methods people selected for notification actually match with the strategy the City uses. She agreed that word of mouth can help.

Chair Barten agreed that word of mouth is very effective, especially when it comes to government.

Commissioner Sis commented that the new billboard can also provide opportunities. He asked if there are plans to resurrect a City sign on Bunker and 47.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that the Public Works Committee will be discussing that this coming week.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she brought that forward as she felt that it got lost in the planning. She commented that there are funds from the vehicle accident to be used for that purpose. She commented that she had some concerns with the representative sample and limited time for the survey. She noted that there has been fantastic interest in pickleball but that is not accurately depicted in the survey, so perhaps a group of people are missing from the survey results. She also did not believe that some of the formats for the questions led to prioritized answers. She also commented on the need to maintain existing infrastructure within parks and trails and noted that perhaps a question should have been added asking if they would be willing to pay a fee to support those items. She noted some of the new program offerings that have been very successful that she did not see in the survey. She stated that perhaps the City should list all the parks and its amenities, noting that perhaps that would help people with handicap accessibility needs to find the best location for them.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood confirmed that those elements are available on the website and a fold out version was included in the *Ramsey Resident* as well.

Recreation Coordinator Proulx commented that she was also concerned with the sample size, noting that they did start with the flyers from Happy Days but after not receiving many responses, they turned to social media and targeted ads. She commented that she did think about having a question about funding, but because it was a small-scale survey, she felt that question would be better addressed in a larger scale survey. She explained that her purpose was to gain a direction on programing for the next year rather than future facilities. She confirmed that she has been tracking the successful events from the past in hopes to continue those.

Commissioner Loss asked if the fee mentioned by Councilmember Musgrove would be related to trail use or for those using a splashpad or other facility.

Councilmember Musgrove replied that her comment was more related to program offerings.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood commented that he was also pleased to see the constructive comments received and noting that residents even thanked the City for having an opportunity to share their input. He asked and received confirmation the pickleball participants were included on the emailed survey list. He commented that the survey can be completed again in one or two years and that will provide great comparison information. He believed items related to funding and/or a community center should be left separately from this type of survey and would be better handled by the City Council. He noted that every two years the City completes a community survey and that would be the more appropriate location for that type of question. He explained that they offered art in the park for free and have also charged a fee of \$5 and found no change in participation, therefore they began charging \$5. He commented that they have added fees to other programing as well and have found that it helps to fund the instructor and/or materials and helps to firm up the commitment of people attending. He noted that all park features are built to ADA compliant standards but noted that there are amenities in other communities that offer therapeutic programing using pools and things of that nature. He noted that the successful events from the last year will be repeated.

Commissioner Sis asked if they have attempted to work with the schools to partner for programing offerings.

Recreation Coordinator Proulx confirmed that she has been making a list of potential partners and the schools/community education are included on that list.

5.02: Consider Reduction in Ice Skating Operations and Maintenance

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that a lot of background information was included in the case and provided a brief overview going back to 1977. He commented on the staff time needed to create and maintain ice for skating. He noted that there has been a decline in outdoor ice skating as more teams and skaters tend to use indoor ice. He commented on the significant snowfall that also makes outdoor rinks unusable for a period of days. He noted that about ten years ago the two skating facilities had 5,000 to 7,000 users and now the use is about half of that even though the population has grown significantly during that period. He recommended shuttering the facility at Ramsey Elementary for the 2023-2024 to gauge whether the Central Park facility would be enough to serve the needs of the community. He noted that they would place a large sign at Ramsey Elementary directing users to Central Park. He stated that once they have the data from this season, they would reassess to determine if one location would better serve the community.

Commissioner Sis asked if there has been consideration of making Ramsey Elementary a more self-serve location that is not staffed.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood replied that they have done that when there has been a lack of rink attendants. He noted that does not work as well as people appreciate being able to go inside to put skates on and warm up. He commented that there have also been issues with vandalism and behavior of older children when there is not an attendant. He commented that it is still a significant cost to set up the ice.

Commissioner Loss asked if there would be a way to track people that first attempted to go to Ramsey Elementary before going to Central Park.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood commented that they could use the numbers from this last winter for comparison and assume that the increase would be people that previously used Ramsey Elementary.

Motion by Commissioner Sis, seconded by Commissioner Loss, to forego the opening of the Ramsey Elementary skating rink for the 2023-2024 skating season, with a focus on the Central Park skating rink this year.

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

6. COMMISSION/STAFF INPUT

Recreation Coordinator Proulx provided a recap on recent program offerings and events and also highlighted upcoming events and programming opportunities.

Commissioner Loss noted that this will be his last meeting as he is moving out of the community. He appreciated his time on the Commission.

Commissioner Sis thanked Commissioner Loss for his participation on the Commission.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

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

The Park and Recreation Commission meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Riverblood
Parks & Assistant Public Works Director

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.