

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2008
RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1. The Recreation & Parks Advisory Commission was called to order by Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt.

Commission Members present:

Basic services providing a community-wide benefit and are heavily subsidized by the City

James Brekke, At-Large

Matthew Cooklock, At-Large

Reubenna Cooley, At-Large

James Driste, At-Large

Deborah Everson, At-Large

Rich Gates, City Council Liaison

Mark Hanna, At-Large

Jim Hubert, At-Large

Rob Jacobs, At-Large

Nicole Jechorek, Planning Commission Liaison

Jeanne Qualley, At-Large

Andrew Reinhardt, At-Large

Brian Rogers, At-Large

Absent:

Paul Hartzell, At-Large

Staff Members present:

Jon Oyanagi, Recreation & Parks Director

Mark Palm, Facility Coordinator

Gina Gryniewski, Program Supervisor

Steve Gulenchyn, Program Supervisor

Michelle Margo, Program Supervisor

Jen Gillard, Adaptive Recreation Specialist

Barb Stewart, Secretary

Others:

Linda Yang, Program Director/Brooklyn Park Youth Ambassador Program

Stephanie Moua, CLIMB Graduate

Maly Thao, CLIMB Graduate

Hue Chee Vang, CLIMB Graduate

Nikhom Vang, CLIMB Graduate

Lilly Vue, CLIMB Graduate

Nelsie Vang, CLIMB Graduate

2. **APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 15, 2008 PRAC AGENDA**

Motion, Mark Hanna; Second, Rob Jacobs, to approve the October 15, 2008 PRAC agenda. Motion unanimously approved.

3. **APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 17, 2008 PRAC MEETING MINUTES**

Motion, Jeanne Qualley; Second, Reubenna Cooley, to approve the September 17, 2008 PRAC minutes. Motion unanimously approved.

4. **OLD BUSINESS**

2009 BUDGET PROCESS UPDATE

Director, Jon Oyanagi provided an update on the 2009 city budget stating that City Manager, Jamie Verbrugge has initiated a new budget process for the city wherein each department will present to the City Council background budget information along with their department's proposed 2009 budget.

Jon, Jan Ficken and Mary Pat Black presented the Recreation & Parks Department budget to the City Council on Monday, October 6. Jon stated discussion and feedback with the Councilmember's was positive. They explained the department's three-tiered Revenue Management breakdown:

Basic Services - Providing a community-wide benefit and are heavily subsidized by the City

Tier One – Programs that benefit a variety of groups and fees/charges do not typically cover expenses. These programs are partially subsidized by the City

Tier Two – Programs that benefit a variety of groups and are supported by their own fees/charges

Jon stated the Administration and Finance departments will present their proposed budgets on October 20. Following those presentations the City Manager will present a citywide budget proposal for the City Council to review on November 17 and final adoption of the budget to be completed in December.

CATERERS AT CAC

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated at the October 6 City Council meeting, staff presented a Request for Council Action (RFCA) to approve providing a choice of multiple catering services for events held at the Community Activity Center (CAC). That RFCA was approved by the City Council and for events May 1, 2009 and after, customers will be offered a choice in caterers for their events: Lookout Catering, Town & Country Catering or Lancer Catering. Although all of the caterers are experienced in ethnic food preparation, an option to add an additional vendor specific to this area was written into the agreements.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt asked where Town & Country Catering is located. Jon responded they are located in Plymouth.

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

BROOKLYN PARK YOUTH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Director, Jon Oyanagi introduced Program Director of the Brooklyn Park Youth Ambassador Program, Linda Yang. Linda works with CLIMB (Culture, Leadership, Integrity, Motivate, Build) a cultural leadership group including a mix of junior and senior high students attending Brooklyn Jr. High School and Park Center High School who want to create a new City ambassador program in partnership with the City of Brooklyn Park. This summer CLIMB assisted with the Shingle Creek project, installed a bench and will work on future landscaping of the area.

Linda recently contacted Director Oyanagi to discuss how to best guide the program and youth of Brooklyn Park to partner up with the City of Brooklyn Park. The program has grown and developed with a vision:

- To serve as ambassadors and represent the City of Brooklyn Park
- To contribute to other countries what they have here in the City of Brooklyn Park
- To visit a different country every year with the first visit planned for London during summer, 2009
- To build a new playground in a different country each year

This evening CLIMB participants Maly Thao, Hue Chee Vang, Nikhom Vang, Lilly Vue, Stephanie Moua and Nelsie Vang gave an overview and presented a Power Point on the Brooklyn Park Youth Ambassador Program. They are requesting support from the City, Recreation & Parks Department and RPAC.

Commissioner, Rob Jacobs asked if the program is open to anyone and how the trip to London will be funded. Linda stated it is open to anyone, information is posted throughout the schools and the program is supported through Target Services. The London trip has been approved by the school board and will be funded through fundraising efforts.

Commissioner, Matt Cooklock asked how many members are involved. Linda stated there are currently 105 members and approximately 15 coaches.

Council Liaison, Rich Gates asked what the cost to the City would be in supporting this group. Linda stated there would be no cost to the city. The program is seeking to create a partnership with the city to assist in legitimizing the program. Future plans include holding a gala fundraising event and students may approach the city to ask for space and support for the event.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt expressed his support of the program stating the city has kept a strong focus on finding opportunities for youth to serve their community and this is the perfect opportunity to engage youth and keep them involved. He encouraged those students interested to apply for the Youth Liaison position currently open on the RPAC.

Jon stated the program may need to consider an alternative name as there currently is a Brooklyn Park Ambassador Program associated with the Tater Daze parade which could cause some identity confusion.

Commissioner, Reubenna Cooley asked what types of activities the students are involved in. Linda stated the group meets twice a week during the school year and are heavily involved in community service including the Monkey Falls project and Christmas charity events.

Commissioner, Mark Hanna thanked the group for attending this evenings meeting and commended them on their presentation.

OUTDOOR RINKS 2008-2009

Facility Coordinator, Mark Palm provided Commissioners with the 2008-2009 Outdoor Skating Rinks evaluation and proposed 2008-2009 Outdoor Skating Rinks schedule. Mark stated each year staff evaluates usage at all of the city facilities including outdoor rinks. The outdoor rink skating program is designed to provide a safe and cost effective outdoor experience. Typically,

the outdoor rinks are up and running for seven weeks during the winter with 12 outdoor pleasure and hockey rinks; five supervised and seven non-supervised (warming house keys may be check out). The department hires 20 outdoor skating rink attendants each season to supervise the rinks. The Recreation & Parks Department works closely in partnership with the Brooklyn Park Lions Club and primary outdoor hockey rink user North Metro Youth Hockey Association (NMYHA).

Program Supervisor, Gina Gryniewski stated staff has reviewed the usage statistics over the past five years and has ascertained that Northwoods Park attendance has declined (1.9 participants/hour) over that period of time. Staff recommends opening Northwoods on December 13; supervising the rink through January 19 which is peak outdoor ice skating time; then although a key could be checked out and the ice rink would continue to be open to the public, staff supervision would be discontinued for the remainder of the season. Taking these steps would save approximately 130 supervision hours (\$1,300) annually.

A second option would be to maintain the ice rink without supervision thereby saving \$2,700 annually.

Mark stated Edinbrook Park has also seen a decline in attendance and staff recommends discontinuing flooding the outdoor ice skating rink located there and adding a pleasure ice sheet at Eidem Homestead. Mark opened the floor for discussion.

Commissioner, Jim Driste asked if it would be advantageous to put in an ice sheet in Founders Park. Director, Jon Oyanagi stated damage to the turf after flooding the area would be a concern.

Commissioner, James Brekke asked if there is a need for any supervision of the outdoor ice at Northwoods Park during the winter season. Mark gave a brief history stating that 10 years ago, there were 20 supervised outdoor skating rinks. Due to large budget cuts beginning in 2003, it was necessary to decrease outdoor rinks to 7. Today the city has 5 outdoor rinks. In 2008, based upon resident's requests and new housing construction the decision was made to reopen outdoor ice skating at Northwoods Park. Although there was some use of the rink it wasn't the increase in attendance that staff expected.

James asked if staff has to update Three Rivers Park District regarding any programming changes at the Eidem Homestead. Mark responded staff does not and that Eidem Homestead along with all programs held there are operated by the Recreation & Parks Department.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt stated he has supervised the outdoor ice rinks at Central Park and supported staff's recommendation to relocate the outdoor ice rink at Edinbrook Park to the Eidem Homestead. He stated the biggest challenge would be in addressing those few local residents who may protest the move.

Commissioner, Jim Hubert stated his support for staff's recommendation to relocate the outdoor ice rink at Edinbrook Park to the Eidem Homestead along with the recommendation for decreasing staff supervision hours at Northwoods Park.

Commissioner, Mark Hanna stated he sees the lights on in the evening at Sunnyside Park and asked if those could be shut off for minimal use. Mark stated the lights are set on timers and staff will review them so that they are activated most efficiently.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers asked if there has ever been an outdoor ice rink at the Eidem Homestead. Mark responded that there has not been one there in the past.

Following further discussion the following motions were brought forward:

Motion, Jim Brekke; Second, Jeanne Qualley to open and provide supervision of the outdoor skating rink at Northwoods Park from December 13, 2008 through January 19, 2009, discontinue supervision at that time and continue maintenance of the ice throughout the remainder of the outdoor ice skating season. Motion unanimously approved.

Motion, Mark Hanna; Second, Jim Hubert to remove the outdoor skating rink at Edinbrook Park and add an outdoor skating rink at the Eidem Homestead. Motion unanimously approved.

SUMMER PROGRAM REPORT

Program Supervisors, Steve Gulenchyn and Michelle Margo presented a post summer review and Power Point on recreation programming. Michelle stated the summer staff designed a tracking program for the summer 2008 season to enhance team building, cultural diversity and behavior guidelines. Staff broke into small groups with the objective in mind to run an effective, efficient meeting wherein staff was able to engage with each other and gain a positive group experience. Brooklyn Park retained 90% of its summer staff and increased leaders in the training program to 15.

New summer campsite at Hamilton Park – Camp began with 15 participants and increased to 75 participants in 2008.

Two new enrichment camps – Staff designed a survey for parents last year and found that they wanted more options for their children to participate in at the end of the summer. Two camps were held for two weeks in August: Anything Goes and the Great Outdoors.

Three Rivers Park District and Coon Rapids Dam – In an effort to bring outdoor opportunities to both youth and adults, staff held several activities at the Coon Rapids Dam site: Picnic and Concert, Canoe Trip, and the Great Outdoors Camp.

Department branding – The Recreation & Parks Department's new initiative tying together a look on all of the marketing and informational materials put out through the department.

Teen Zone – Teens were asked for input and feedback on their needs and wants. A new Teen Zone location was then established at the Zanewood Recreation Center. Several activities and events were held at the Center including the Bobby Brown event, a collaboration with the Recreation & Parks and Police departments, Walmart Corporation and many volunteers. Teen sessions were held including instruction on life skills along with a parenting workshop. The event ended with a banquet attended by all.

Silver Sneakers – New fitness program for seniors.

Fantastic Fridays – New program providing teen trips on Fridays: Wacky Water Day, Como Zoo and Brunswick Bowl.

The Recreation & Parks Department worked in collaboration with outside departments and organizations including:

5K Spud Run, National Night Out, Spud Hunt, Tater Daze Parade and the Step to it Challenge (a walking competition with surrounding communities). Senior Coordinator, Pat Busch led the Challenge and Brooklyn Park took first place.

Special events in the parks included:

Concerts in the Parks – Concerts were held in partnership with the Police Department and held in individual parks rather than holding them in one location.

Movie in the Parks – M&I Bank contacted the city asking to sponsor the event. The Recreation & Parks and Communications departments worked together to present ‘Horton Hears a Who’ and provide inflatables for children to play on at Central Park. The next movie ‘Ironman’ will be shown tomorrow evening at Edinburgh USA. The public can reserve a golf cart by visiting www.brooklynparkyouth.com

Adult Sports League – A new collaboration was entered into with Northwest Adult Sports League (NWASL) which includes the cities of Robbsindale, New Hope, Plymouth, Maple Grove and Brooklyn Park. Working in partnership with surrounding cities enables adults to put together leagues by tapping into other adults with the same interests.

Softball League – 155 teams registered for softball leagues this summer.

Youth Sports – The Recreation and Parks Department is well known for offering sports programs to youth, ages 3-18 years. The instructional sport classes introduce sports to children and give them instruction in how to participate.

Music in the Park – New this year was taking the Music in the Park series out to the neighborhoods in conjunction with providing the Playground in a Bag concept. Summer staff brought equipment, games and activities in addition to a musical concert to the parks. In addition, 11 neighborhood meetings were held in collaboration with the Police Department.

Eidem Homestead – 29 tours were scheduled with over 1,500 people attending. An additional session of Critter Camp was held due to the high demand from the public. Both sessions were filled. Promotional filming at the Eidem Homestead was arranged for over the summer months. Site Coordinator, Kay Grotenhuis retired following 30 years of service.

Steve stated the Recreation & Parks Department summer program was a big success and opened the floor to questions.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers asked if food and beverage would be available at tomorrow nights showing of ‘Ironman’. Michelle stated the Girvan Grille will have beverages and popcorn available to purchase. In addition, they are offering a ‘child eats free with adult’ special.

ADAPTIVE SERVICES REPORT

Adaptive Recreation Specialist, Jen Gillard has been with the Recreation & Parks Department for 8-1/2 years. Jen explained that the City is bound by the American Disability Association (ADA) to not discriminate anyone on the basis of disability and this includes parks and programs. ADA dictates that the City is required to provide reasonable accommodations to

enable those with disabilities to participate fully in programs and activities. To do so may require hiring of extra staff, modifying a program or activity, or basically putting in place anything that is necessary to allow the disabled to participate without changing the inherent program or activity.

Jen stated every child has different needs and she works closely with their families to ascertain what is needed and then designs a plan that works specific to addressing those needs. Current participants include those with Autism, ADHD, Down Syndrome, Speech Delay, Behavior Concerns, Deaf or hard of hearing, Visual Impairment, Cerebral Palsy, and Tourette's Syndrome. The majority of these children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The Recreation & Parks Department contracts with REACH who typically handles high needs participants and provides adaptive recreation programs for ages 5 to older adults.

Over the past ten years as increased awareness in disabilities and diagnosis has reached the public, along with parent referrals and word of mouth, the city's recreation programs has seen an increase in special needs children. The number of participants this summer increased by 61 kids and this fall the inclusion program increased to 27 children. Jen stated this increase in special needs children will continue each year and it is important to plan and budget for inclusion staff in the future. Providing services for those with disabilities is time intensive, requires qualified staff, and is an area that has to be adequately funded.

This year a new program was designed titled Splash Pals Swim School. Aquatics Coordinator, Jen Kordon took advantage of the annual pool 'down time' to offer private swim lessons to disabled children. Eight staff members provided lessons in an environment free of distractions and conducive to increasing their learning ability. This innovative program was written up in the MRPA magazine, featured on Cable 12, and staff will now take this program to the City of Plymouth and train their aquatic staff to set up their own Splash Pals program.

Commissioner, Matt Cooklock asked if the ratio of staff to student could be adjusted to 2:1 in order to include more participants into the Splash Pals program. Jen responded that although the goal is to get the children to a point where they can move on to a larger instructor to participant ratio, the point of the Splash Pals class is that the participants needs and receives that 1:1 support. Staff continues to research and look at different ideas on how to expand the class without increasing the costs.

FIELD USE REPORT

Program Supervisor, Steve Gulenchyn presented a Power Point and annual field use review. The city has over 100 athletic fields available to users including 19 softball, 16 soccer, 2 lacrosse, 1 cricket pitch, 2 football, 48 softball/baseball, and 17 baseball. The Recreation & Parks staff reserves and provides permits for field usage to the public for game use only from April through November. Over 4,460 field reservations were processed in the 2008 season with a 19% increase in revenue generated. The main users are the Recreation & Parks Department, Brooklyn Park Athletic Association (BPAA), Babe Ruth Baseball, Maple Brook Soccer, Kickers Soccer, Rebels Soccer, Maranatha Academy, Osseo District 279, and Northwest Lacrosse.

The City of Brooklyn Park is a diverse community experiencing a transitioning of cultures, ages, interests, and a wide range in household incomes. In the midst of this transition, soccer has become the mainstream sport that can include many of the city's population. Discussion

was held at the September, 2008 RPAC meeting regarding the proposed Monroe soccer field which could address the increased demand for soccer fields.

Commissioner, Matt Cooklock expressed his support in introducing additional soccer fields in Brooklyn Park including a new one in Monroe Park. He asked if there is a way to convert any of the city's current baseball fields into soccer fields. Director, Jon Oyanagi stated this idea has been discussed in the past and staff will continue to research this as an option.

Commissioner, Jim Driste asked if the city has fields for the younger child. Steve responded in the affirmative stating the city has outdoor fields which children as young as 5 years old can play games on.

Steve stated the City of Brooklyn Park hires and retains the highest quality recreational staff. He encouraged Commissioners to personally join and attend some of the recreation programs, activities or events to best gauge the tremendous impact that they make on the community.

DOG PARKS

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated in 2006 the RPAC was presented with a proposal to work with the City of Crystal to develop a dog park located near the Crystal Airport. Following lengthy discussion and input from its Commissioners, the RPAC recommended approval of the proposal and subsequently the City Council passed that recommendation. At that time the residents in the area expressed opposition to the dog park and its development was put on hold.

Jon presented a Power depicting a wide variety of parks located nationwide. There are many considerations when designing and selecting a location for a dog park including sound/annoyance of dogs barking, sight/aesthetic appeal, smell and size. Dog Parks typically would include a fenced in area, parking lot, shade/trees, signage with rules, drinking water, waste receptacles, possibly some security lighting, bag dispensers, benches, and surfacing.

Jon stated the city currently requires all dogs to be licensed. As a part of that licensing procedure it would be a possibility to add a fee for a dog park permit that might help off-set operational costs.

Council Liaison, Rich Gates stated he has received calls and requests from residents for the development of a dog park in Brooklyn Park. He and Jon have researched possible locations within the city for a dog park and he expressed his preference for one of the ice rinks to be converted to a dog park. Unfortunately, outdoor ice rinks are typically located close to residential areas or are used for other programs. Rich stated several surrounding cities have dog parks; Three Rivers has several; and a new dog park has been developed near Shady Oak and Highway 62. The City of Crystal has expressed their continued interest and willingness in considering a dog park located in the park near the Crystal Airport. Rich opened the floor to Commissioners thoughts, ideas and input.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt asked how staff would collect the fees and enforce rules. Rich stated the fee would be collected at City Hall at the same time dog owners purchased their dog license. Enforcement of rules would be accomplished via signage posted in the dog park, peer pressure, and/or spot checks.

Commissioner, Mark Hanna asked if the Recreation & Parks Department has received many requests for a dog park. Jon stated the department has received some requests.

Commissioner, Matt Cooklock expressed his support in setting aside one ice rink as a dog park and tracking the response from the public. If it is positive, a larger area could be considered.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers asked if there is a timeline established for this project. Rich stated he would like to open a dog park to the public by spring of 2009.

Commissioner, Jim Hubert stated after reviewing the options, he would select the Environmental Area as a site and asked if staff could work with Three Rivers Parks District to develop a site at Coon Rapids Dam. Rich stated Three Rivers Parks District requires a \$30 fee for each dog and that may be a big deterrent to Brooklyn Park dog owners.

Commissioner, Rob Jacobs stated staff should consider not charging a fee at all for the first year and consider this a testing year. He asked if there is any merit in developing two dog park sites; one for big dogs and one for smaller dogs. Rich stated although it is possible to have two sites, he has never seen a problem with mixing larger and smaller dogs together.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers asked if it is useful to set up a sub committee to discuss and plan a dog park. Rich stated that would be appropriate after testing the site for a year.

Commissioner, Jeanne Qualley asked if staff has considered River Park as a possible site. Jon stated Rive Park does not have an ice rink and fencing would have to be installed.

Following further discussion the following motion was brought forward:

Motion, Brian Rogers; Second, Mark Hanna, in support of a dog park concept within the City of Brooklyn Park. The RPAC recommends that Director Jon Oyanagi and Councilman Rich Gates move forward on further research of a location for a dog park. Motion unanimously approved.

6. **DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW**
N/A

7. **OTHER ITEMS BY COMMISSION**

◆ CAC 25th Anniversary

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt stated he attended the 25th Anniversary celebration on Sunday, October 12 and commended the Recreation & Parks Department staff for the great job they did in putting the event on.

◆ Marketing Plan

Commissioner, Jim Brekke asked when the first meeting will be held for Marketing Plan committee to meet. Recreation Manager, Jan Ficken stated the first meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 18 and detailed information and materials will be mailed to the committee members soon.

◆ Tater Daze

Commissioner, Mark Hanna reported that the second Tater Daze meeting will be held at City Hall, 7:00 p.m. on October 28. Plans for the parade have begun; the various committees are being put together; a new parade route is being developed; and entertainment contacts have begun.

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion, Jim Hubert; Second, Matthew Cooklock, to adjourn. Motion unanimously approved.