

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2009  
RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY COMMISSION

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

Commission Members present:

Ashley Anderson, Student Representative  
James Brekke, At-Large  
Reubenna Cooley, At-Large  
James Driste, At-Large  
Deborah Everson, At-Large  
Dean Heng, City Council Liaison  
Mark Hanna, At-Large  
Paul Hartzell, At-Large  
Rob Jacobs, At-Large  
Nicole Jechorek, Planning Commission Liaison  
Jeanne Qualley, At-Large  
Andrew Reinhardt, At-Large  
Brian Rogers, At-Large

Commission Members absent:

Matthew Cooklock, At-Large  
Jim Hubert, At-Large

Staff Members present:

Jon Oyanagi, Recreation & Parks Director  
Mary Pat Black, Parks & Facilities Manager  
Jan Ficken, Recreation & Services Manager  
Barb Stewart, Secretary

Others:

Rich Gates, City Council member  
Tom Dauer, Resident  
Heidi Dauer, Resident  
Jay Steege, Resident

**2. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 18, 2009 RPAC AGENDA**

**Motion, Mark Hanna; Second, Jeanne Qualley, to approve the February 18, 2009 RPAC agenda. Motion unanimously approved.**

**3. APPROVAL OF JANUARY 21, 2009 RPAC MEETING MINUTES**

**Motion, James Brekke; Second, Mark Hanna, to approve the January 21, 2009 RPAC minutes. Motion unanimously approved.**

#### 4. OLD BUSINESS

##### DOG PARK

Director, Jon Oyanagi, stated the Commissioners have discussed a Dog Park concept at previous RPAC meetings and after researching several locations, brought forward Brookdale Park as a recommended test site for the city's first Dog Park. Brookdale Park is an ideal site with its large open area located between the sliding hill and ball fields, existing guard rail providing a natural boundary for the area, trees providing shade, minimal impact on surrounding residences and ability to keep costs to a minimum including fencing and waste containers.

The Dog Park would be open seasonally to the public from spring through fall. A temporary wire mesh fence would be erected in the spring and then removed once again in the fall. Dog owners and their pets would access the area from both parking lots.

City Council Liaison, Dean Heng asked what the land located to the right of the proposed Dog Park is used for. Jon stated that is an open skate area and will possibly be used this summer as a site for Camp Brookdale.

Staff reviewed several rules lists in place at surrounding dog exercise areas and suggests initiating the following rules:

Dogs must be properly licensed and vaccinated.

Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and upon leaving the off-leash area and in transition corridors.

Owners must have a visible leash at all times.

Owners must be in verbal control of their dogs at all times and prevent aggressive behavior, biting, fighting or excessive barking.

Owners are responsible for providing water for their dog.

Owners are liable for damage or injury inflicted by their dogs.

Owners must possess a device for cleanup and disposal of feces.

Dogs in heat are not allowed.

Dogs must stay within signed boundaries.

Owners must comply with all other park rules and regulations.

Jon stated if a problem does arise with dogs running loose, staff would research installing additional fencing.

Dean asked if it is necessary to contact surrounding residents of the Dog Park. City Council Member, Rich Gates stated of all of the locations considered for a Dog Park, the Brookdale Park site is located furthest away from neighbors with natural buffers of trees and a hill. If it does become an issue to surrounding residents that can be dealt with at that time.

Commissioner, Rob Jacobs stated the rules are simply a guideline and asked how they would be enforced. Rich agreed stating although this is not a City Ordinance and no fines would be imposed, if there are any problems the neighbors can contact the Police Department and they will respond. Commissioner, Mark Hanna stated a Dog Park located in Brookdale Park will greatly control past problems encountered with damage

to the hills. A Dog Park will help attract some 'good traffic' into the neighborhood rather than the 'problematic traffic' experienced in the past.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt stated the City of Crystal has instituted a registration fee for use of their Dog Park and asked if Brooklyn Park will do the same. Rich stated Crystal allocates a very small portion of their dog license fees to their Dog Park, approximately \$5 a year. Andrew stated he envisioned dog owners paying for a license to use the Dog Park and if a problem occurs, that license would be pulled. Rich stated this Dog Park is on a trial basis only and if it does work, staff can always add a fee at a later date.

Brooklyn Park residents, Tom and Heidi Dauer expressed their support of the Dog Park. They previously resided in Minneapolis and found the Dog Park concept a positive experience there. Minneapolis charges dog owners a \$25 fee per year to access the dog parks and felt that was a reasonable fee. They, along with many other dog owners, love the parks and were able to police themselves.

Andrew asked if the City would provide bags upon opening the Dog Park. Rich stated signs and fencing would be installed and then a 'watch and see' approach would be followed. Jon Oyanagi said there would be containers available for area users to leave plastic bags for public use.

Commissioner, Paul Hartzell expressed his support of a Dog Park. Paul asked what the city's liability is if a dog attacks someone. Rich stated dog owners would be liable for any damages their dog(s) make.

Dean stated it may be more appropriate and increase traffic control if owners could access the area byway of just the larger parking lot. Andrew stated that allowing just one access point would actually increase a possible traffic problem. Rich stated if it does become a problem it can be addressed at that time.

Following further discussion and input from Commissioners and staff, the following motion was brought forward:

**Motion, Brian Rogers; Second, Mark Hanna, to recommend accepting the Dog Park proposal as outlined. Motion unanimously approved.**

#### YMCA

Director, Jon Oyanagi, stated staff continues work on a Memorandum of Understanding to achieve gaining an aquatics facility. Recreation & Parks and YMCA staff met on February 9 to discuss the YMCA building an indoor facility and the City adding on an outdoor facility. The YMCA staff has reopened discussion with the development company, Ryan Companies. Although Target has announced postponing development for four years, Ryan Companies is still interested in moving forward with the initial offer to the YMCA of land in the Target development in which to build.

Staff toured the North Minneapolis YMCA located near North Commons Park. The YMCA has totally remodeled the inside turning it into a youth enrichment center with state of the art fitness equipment, zero depth entry pool, two lap swim lanes, meeting rooms and gym.

Before moving forward with further plans for development of a YMCA facility, they would like an increased presence in Brooklyn Park. Staff recommended the Zanewood Recreation Center as a site location for some YMCA programs. A tour of the Zanewood site will be held and the YMCA will research it's feasibility as a site. Although realizing economic times are not favorable to raise funds for a new facility, the YMCA will meet with an architect to discuss conceptual designs including a smaller building that could be phased into a larger facility containing a teen center and aquatics facility.

Commissioner, James Brekke thanked Director Oyanagi and staff for their dedication and work on acquiring an aquatics facility in Brooklyn Park but is doubtful that a facility will be built in these tough economic times.

#### YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES COALITION UPDATE

Recreation & Services Manager, Jan Ficken stated the last update provided to Commissioners was in April, 2008. The Youth Opportunities Coalition (YOC) encompasses:

Brooklyn Alliance – government leaders, mayors, elected officials, county and city members who help set policy. They just signed a Joint Powers Agreement at the January 9 Blue Jean Ball.

Youth Council – students from Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center junior and senior high schools.

Adult Coalition – parents from both Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center. Both communities working together on youth issues.

Jan handed out the champions for Youth Call to Action stating the coalition has been working on developing a strategic plan with input from both community's youth and adults. Six goals have been identified in the plan:

- Safe places
- Transportation
- Employment
- Communication
- Stronger intergenerational opportunities
- Working on teen crime

The coalition has put together action teams comprised of both youth and adults to address each of the goals and are beginning to look at ways of improving these areas. In addition, they are developing ideas for ramping up the services at the Zanewood Recreation Center located in the southern area of the city.

Jan updated Commissioners on the Blue Jean Ball held on January 9. This event was held in celebration of and kick off for the signing of the Joint Powers Agreement. This event raised money specifically for the Zanewood Recreation Center making it possible to purchase some much needed equipment at the site along with a donation of a Dell laptop computer as prize for a drawing. Principal of Palmer Lake Elementary School, Tommy Watson was the keynote speaker and spoke on the positive impact recreation centers made in his life and their importance in changing other young people lives. Commissioner, Brian Rogers has been active in the YOC and assists on the

Transportation Action Team. Brian reported his daughter attended the recent inauguration in Washington DC and while there, had the opportunity to speak with Amy Klobachar and share the importance of recreation and parks with her, and the transportation needs in our community.

Jan reported staff is gearing up with the Police Department to hire the Zanewood supervisor position.

## 5. NEW BUSINESS

### GEOCACHE

Parks and Facilities Manager, Mary Pat Black stated she has received several requests for instituting a Geocaching policy within the City of Brooklyn Park. Mary Pat explained that Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by people using GPS devices. It brings technology and nature together. It is a fun outdoor activity that gets individuals and families into the parks. Geocaching is initiated by an individual hiding a cache, normally a waterproof container with small items inside, then recording the location with a Global Positioning Unit (GPS). The individual then posts the GPS coordinates along with a description of the cache on the Geocaching Web site, [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com). Other individuals then try to find the cache. When it is located, participants sign a logbook, then take or leave a small item. They also post their find in the on-line logbook.

Mary Pat stated this is an ideal way to get people out to the city parks and something families can do together. She has researched policies in place in surrounding communities and has found them basically sound and simple common sense rules.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt asked if any of the city parks would be off limits. Director, Jon Oyanagi stated there are a few significant areas we wouldn't want people to leave a cache such as the Environmental Area and Edinburgh Golf Course. In addition, because there is the potential that people leave something inappropriate or dangerous in a cache, a policy would be in place requiring participants to register their cache with the Recreation & Parks Department.

Commissioner, Rob Jacobs asked how long a cache can be in the park. Mary Pat stated there are hundreds of people geocaching and the caches can be kept in the parks for months. Rob asked if we could limit a cache stored in the park to 12 months. Mary Pat stated that is possible but she is unsure if the department has staff time to track them down, go to the parks, and remove them. Ashley suggested requiring participants to re-register every 12 months.

Student Representative, Ashley Anderson asked if the teens at the Zanewood Recreation Center could be involved in geocaching. Mary Pat responded in the affirmative and presented the possibility of holding a class on geocaching. Mary Pat encouraged staff and Commissioners to Google geocaching on the World Wide Web and check out the different things geocachers do.

Andrew asked if staff could arrange to have an experienced geocacher available to advocate for this program before the City Council. Mary Pat responded in the affirmative.

**Motion, Jeanne Qualley; Second, Jim Driste, to recommend approval of the Recreation & Parks geocaching policy. Further recommendation that staff explore possible time limits, number of caches, permitted areas and that staff monitor the policy for a 12 month period. Motion unanimously approved.**

 HUNTINGTON POINTE IDEA

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated this agenda item was discussed at the January 21, 2009 RPAC meeting at which time City Council Liaison, Dean Heng asked if staff would research possible temporary uses for the now vacant area.

Jon stated he has discussed possibilities for the site with Community Development staff that are in charge of promoting the development of the site. The discussion outcome was that they prefer to let the area remain 'as is' in order to show prospective developers a rough and open development site with the thought that developers will see more options available without changing the site or a park setting. In addition, users tend to grow fond of a site and do not want it to change leaving developers with a fight on their hands.


Dean stated Snyders is closing their store and other businesses in the area are struggling, too, bringing with it the real possibility that the City will have to purchase some of that property, expanding the void even larger. With the negative economy it could be five years or more before any of this area is developed.

Dean stated he spoke with Operations & Maintenance Director, Jon Theil and Parks Superintendent, Dale Reed about their concerns that if the area remains as is, it will become a dump site and that people have already began dumping stuff there every week. Dean stated the Zane Corridor brings with it a 'bad' image and it is important to show developers that the city can get people into that area. Dean suggested placing some basic picnic tables at the site would improve the appearance and discourage people using it as a dumping site.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt asked how the site is currently being maintained. Jon stated the foundations and parking lots have been removed, the area seeded and two power lines currently run through it. Andrew stated the idea of a couple of picnic tables is a good idea but may be too costly if it is mandatory that the City bring in water and restrooms for public use

Jon stated the Community Development staff did approve of the single event idea. Several suggestions for the site were discussed including a location for the Farmers Market, holding Tater Daze activities there, constructing a Frisbee Golf area, and holding an art fair at the site.

Jon stated staff will research and narrow down the possibilities for the site and invite a Community Development staff to further discuss this item at a future RPAC meeting.

 2009/2010 BUDGET

Director, Jon Oyanagi updated Commissioners on the 2009/2010 budget stating that due to cuts in Local Government Aid (LGA), the City is facing an approximate \$1.6 million shortfall in the 2009 budget. The City Manager and City Council are working together to ascertain the exact amount and discuss concrete ideas to make up that shortfall by shifting existing funds and does not currently involve staff cuts. In addition,

a \$2.3 million shortfall is anticipated in the 2010 budget and most likely will involve staff and services cuts.

The City department directors and Council met in January and again yesterday to discuss visioning and direction the City will take into the future. The discussions were positive, valuable and identified six vision statements with a goal to reach them by 2015. Keeping those visions in mind will help guide staff and Council in making budget decisions that make sense rather than making arbitrarily reductions.

Jon stated that personally and professionally, the Recreation and Parks staff sees their role as a very important part of the community. The staff are advocates of the benefits of Recreation and Parks and 'sells' those benefits to the public. Jon put together some talking points and encouraged RPAC members to seek out opportunities to preach these benefits to the public:

- Provides positive programs and healthy activities for youth
- Provides safe places for youth
- Reduces juvenile crime
- Activities and programs directly address childhood obesity nature-deficit disorder and the deterioration of our country's overall health
- Increases property values
- Attracts businesses
- Addresses under-employment
- Next to climate, retirees rank parks and recreation amenities as most important to relocation decisions

Commissioner, James Brekke stated parks are very important to the community and unfortunately, is one of the first areas government looks at and wants to cut. Dean stated the public does not understand how important recreation services are and the cost in maintaining the parks.

City Council Liaison, Dean Heng agreed that parks are valuable and the City Council is looking at how many people are being served and what does it cost. It is very difficult to put a cost number on parks. Commissioner, Jeanne Qualley stated she would argue that the Recreation & Parks Department serves far more people than the Police or Fire departments. Jon stated the Community Activity Center sees over 400,000 visitors a year to that one facility alone. Jeanne asked if a poll regarding parks could be put on the City webpage. Jon responded in the affirmative and will research the question.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers asked how MRPA is responding to these budget problems. Jon stated MRPA develops a legislative platform each year and are lobbying the legislature right now on these issues. Jon reminded Commissioners that the constitutional amendment on the national ballot regarding natural resource funding was a huge victory and on a large part due to MRPA efforts.

#### MARKETING PLAN UPDATEA

Recreation & Services Manager, Jan Ficken handed out a draft of the marketing plan which will be taken to the Marketing Plan Committee next week. The members have been working together to identify the department's strong points, develop a branding image, and develop a department strategy plan resulting in three key imaging points:

The place (different parks and facilities)  
The play (whole inspiration to get motivated to do things together)  
The 'Get up and Go' goal (get activated, get going, be fit, use the park)

Next week the committee will be discussing additional focus areas:

Establish the brand and image.  
The role that parks & recreation plays and contributes to the quality of a community.  
Telling the recreation & parks story and its impact on people. Each story is unique and needs to be captured.  
Investment in youth activities.  
Concept that parks and open spaces are very safe.

Jan stated the importance of increasing the public relations efforts in using the parks as a free offering to the public.

## 6. **OTHER ITEMS**

### **Tater Daze**

Commissioner, Mark Hanna updated Commissioners that the Tater Daze Committee Members are working hard on arrangements for the 2009 Tater Daze event and encouraged those Commissioners interested to join the committee. Meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of every month in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

### **Volunteer Appreciation Event**

Commissioner, Mark Hanna encouraged Commissions to watch for their invitation to attend the April 2 Volunteer Appreciation Event. Mark has attended the event in past years and spoke highly of the good food and entertainment provided.

### **Golf Academy Brochure**

Parks & Facilities Manager, Mary Pat Black handed out the new 2009 golf academy brochure.

## 7. **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion, Paul Hartzell; Second, Jeanne Qualley, to adjourn. Motion unanimously approved.**