

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 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
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

Commission Members absent:

Matthew Cooklock, At-Large
Paul Hartzell, At-Large

Staff Members present:

Jon Oyanagi, Recreation & Parks Director
Jan Ficken, Recreation & Services Manager
Barb Stewart, Secretary

Others:

Future Commissioner, Seyon Nyanwleh
Future Commissioner, Kim Sundy
Jordan Lofgren, Recreation Intern

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

Motion, Jim Driste; Second, James Brekke, to approve the March 18, 2009 RPAC agenda. Motion unanimously approved.

3. **APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 18, 2009 RPAC MEETING MINUTES**

Motion, Mark Hanna; Second, Reubenna Cooley, to approve the February 18, 2009 RPAC minutes with the following amendment to page 2, paragraph 6:

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 becomes an issue to surrounding residents we can monitor, adjust and review the neighborhoods concerns accordingly throughout the test process.

Motion unanimously approved.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt introduced and welcomed new Commissioner, Kim Sundy.

4. **OLD BUSINESS**

DOG PARK

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated the February 18, 2009 RPAC recommendation to accept the Dog Park proposal was presented to the City Council along with support information and discussion. Subsequently the City Council Members approved the Dog Park pilot project at their March 2, 2009 meeting. The following addition to the rules will be included: No dangerous, or potentially dangerous, dogs are allowed.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt expressed his support of the Dog Park and looks forward to making the Brookdale Park Dog Park a permanent area for dogs in the future. An article about the Dog Park has been published in the SunPost and has been covered on Channel 12.

The anticipated opening of the Dog Park is April 30, 2009.

GEOCACHING

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated the City Council approved unanimously to allow geocaching in the city's parks at their March 2, 2009 meeting. Staff will begin advertising the policy at a variety of popular on-line geocache locations and contact the local geocache association to assist with notification.

MARKETING PLAN UPDATE

Recreation & Services Manager, Jan Ficken reported that the final Marketing Plan was approved following a few minor revisions. Staff will be working on the strategies laid out in the Marketing Plan throughout 2009. Jan provided commissioners with the new summer brochure that is in the process of delivery to homes.

Several focus areas for 2009 were identified including:

- 1 – Establishing the Recreation & Parks Department branding and implementing its use in a consistent manner.
- 2 – Continue fostering the worth and value of parks and recreation within our community including increased target marketing.
- 3 – Locating a storyteller to spread the parks story and how it impacts people in the community. Each story is unique and needs to be captured. Increased use of YouTube.
- 4 – Continue to promote the wonderful and positive things that parks and recreation provides in the community. Utilize the media and people in the community to get the story out to the public. Communications Coordinator, Mary Tan has been very helpful to the department in filming and putting together short videos featuring the many programs and recreational opportunities recreation and parks provides.
- 5 - Teens within the Youth Opportunities Coalition (YOC) are working on youth-to-youth marketing. Using these young people to market to teens in a social setting is priceless.
- 6 – Talking with residents and getting the story out that the community and parks are safe.

Director, Jon Oyanagi reminded Commissioners that the Marketing Plan is a multi-year plan. This plan will continue to evolve and include many areas that were not initially selected by the Marketing Team to focus on in 2009. Jon thanked Commissioners, Jim Brekke, Matthew Cooklock and Brian Rogers for their time and assistance to the Marketing Plan Team. Commissioner, Brian Rogers stated it was a fun process and he enjoyed working with the group.

🌲 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated that in 2008, the RPAC and City Council approved the Recreation & Parks Department Strategic Plan. Since that time staff has been working on the plan, identifying focus areas, setting goals, and putting in place specific measurable objectives. Meeting these objectives ties into the staff's daily work responsibilities and will also be incorporated into their annual performance evaluation. Jon stated it will take a year or so for the department to work through the first work plan.

🌲 ZANEWOOD UPDATE

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated although the city is facing budget cuts in 2009 and 2010, the Recreation & Parks Department is fortunate that the City Council is supportive and holds as a high priority the value of recreation and parks. In expression of their support a new recreation position at the Zanewood Recreation Center (ZRC) was approved. The department received 77 applications with 29 of them meeting the minimal qualifications. In the attempt to be proactive in meeting anticipated budget cuts, staff shifted gears, revisited the position, and looked internally to fill it. Taking this opportunity frees up the cost of a current position and those duties can be spread out over several staff. In addition, hiring internally keeps the department ahead of the game by providing a staff member with already established connections with the community, staff, knowledge of city procedures, etc. The end result is that the department will be eliminating a position without layoff of staff. The new position begins April 6 and the Police Department is currently advertising for a Police Liaison to work with the new staff beginning in mid-April.

Future Commissioner, Seyon Nyanwleh asked what some of the things residents can expect to see at the Zanewood Recreation Center when the new position is filled. Jon stated that currently the public is unsure when the ZRC is open on any given day. The new position brings with it the ability to have the center open for regular and consistent hours, days, dates and times. Expanded programming opportunities can be offered for all ages, preschool through senior. The Teen Zone is currently housed at the ZRC and before and after school activities for teens can be designed and offered.

5. **NEW BUSINESS**

🌲 TENNIS COURT MASTER PLAN

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated that the sport of tennis hit its peak in popularity during the 1970's and 1980's. Since that time the sport has seen a decrease in popularity and number of people playing. With that decreased popularity the city must look at the most efficient use of resources in providing tennis to the public. Jon provided a city map indicating the location of all of the tennis courts including those located on city and school properties. Jon asked Commissioners to review the number of tennis courts along with their locations and provide feedback, ideas, or suggestions on possibly eliminating some of the courts. Specifically in consideration for removal at this time are the tennis courts located at Lakeland and Norwood parks.

Lengthy and in-depth discussion ensued as follows:

Andrew stated tonight Commissioners are considering the tennis courts at Lakeland and Norwood parks be removed. There are no nets at those parks now and staff has not received any complaints about that. Nets have not been set due to the inferior playing surface which can be considered a liability risk.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers asked how staff measures the usage of tennis courts. Jon responded it is difficult to track 'hard numbers' of tennis court users but we do see heavy play at both Noble and Central parks. Brian asked if there was a way to meter which courts are used. Jon stated we would have to pay someone to go out to the courts and count which is time consuming and costly. Commissioner, Mark Hanna suggested that Commissioners do the counting.

Commissioner, Jim Hubert stated it is important to know if the courts are being used or not before removing a court. Jon suggested posting a sign stating we are considering removing the tennis court and ask them to either email or call in their comments. In addition, we could post the information on the website and ask for comments from the public, along with holding public meetings.

Commissioner, Rob Jacobs asked if there is value in each Commissioner adopting a tennis court and go out on the weekend to count the number of users. Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt encouraged Commissioners to check out the parks in their area and count people using the courts as they drive by.

Brian stated he has received emails regarding how difficult it is to get on a tennis court at Park Center.

City Council Liaison, Dean Heng suggested staff research possible multiple uses for the tennis courts such as volleyball or sport courts. Dean asked if tennis courts are lit. Jon stated Noble Sports Park and Central Park are lit. Jim Driste suggested grouping the tennis courts together in more exposed areas and lighting them.

Student Representative, Ashley Anderson asked if it is less expensive to convert the courts for an alternative use rather than to rehab the courts. Jon responded that it depends on the alternative use.

Commissioner, Rob Jacobs asked what happens to the land if the courts are removed. Jon stated the courts would be changed to turf until another plan is in place.

Dean suggested installing sport court platforms rather than tearing up and rebuilding a traditional tennis court. Jon responded that Minneapolis converted some of their courts and installed sport courts at approximately two-thirds of the cost. The problem with that is that the weeds underneath grow up through the courts.

Future Commissioner, Kim Sundy suggested converting some of the tennis courts into soccer fields due to the large demand for soccer fields and low maintenance costs,

Commissioner, Deborah Everson suggested scattering tennis courts throughout the city. Jon stated that Minneapolis is trying to design bigger clusters of courts and shutting down the unused courts. It does have a drawback in that it cuts back on the opportunity for youth to get out on a court just to experiment with tennis. Deborah asked how expensive tennis courts are to maintain. Jon stated it costs \$120,000 to build a two-court tennis court and approximately \$20,000 every 5-6 years to resurface it.

Dean asked if staff would research an inexpensive way to post at the parks letting the public know of the other court locations throughout the city. Jon responded in the affirmative.

Future Commissioner, Seyon Nyanwleh stated this has been a good meeting and it would be effective to take a future meeting out to visit the parks individually to determine how the parks are used. Andrew stated the RPAC conducts an annual park tour during the summer visiting several parks throughout the city. Andrew encouraged Commissioners to act as city ambassadors taking the opportunity to speak to the public regarding recreation and parks whenever possible.

Commissioner, Jim Brekke asked what the court removal cost is. Jon stated approximately \$10,000.

Brian Rogers asked how the master plan for Lakeland Park is affected by eliminating the court. Jon stated there is currently not a master plan for Lakeland Park.

Mark Hanna suggested commissioners look at the parks and tennis courts in their neighborhoods and come back next month with their feedback. Jim Driste stated it is too cold right now and suggested removing the Lakeland and Norwood park courts now and look at the other parks in warmer weather when people will be playing tennis.

Following further discussion, input and feedback the following motion was entertained:

Motion, Jim Hubert; Second, Jeanne Qualley, to remove the courts at Norwood and Lakeland parks and ask that RPAC Commissioners gather information over the next few months to discuss a tennis court master plan at a future meeting. Motion unanimously approved.

2010-2011 BUDGET-OPERATING AND CAPITAL PROPOSALS

Director, Jon Oyanagi passed out information on the 2010-2011 budget and CIP for discussion. Jon asked Commissioners for their input of any new ideas, initiatives, suggested improvements or elimination of programs. Jon stated the city is facing a \$2 million shortfall in 2010. Jon stated the City Council Members are working on city goals and objectives that meet their vision while prioritizing what is important to the city and then ascertain how to reach the vision within budget constraints.

Commissioner, Jim Hubert recommended that the Operations & Maintenance crews continue with the current park maintenance schedule and hold off on any new park or city facility development.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers suggested that further details and specifics be discussed over the next couple of months relative to Splash Park, Zane Sports Complex and River Park.

Following further input and discussion, Jon reiterated the need for guidance from the RPAC members in determining those department programs and activities that are a priority to the city. Jon asked that commissioners think about that and this agenda item will be brought back at a future RPAC meeting for further discussion.

CLEAN UP THE PARK PREVIEW

Director, Jon Oyanagi reminded Commissioners that this years Clean Up the Park annual event will begin on April 25. This popular program allows families and groups to volunteer in cleaning up the city parks. People can pick the park they want to work in. In addition, April 22 is Earth Day and coincides with this event. Jon invited Commissioners to participate also.

6. OTHER ITEMS

Volunteer Appreciation Event

Director, Jon Oyanagi handed out an invitational flyer and reminded Commissioners of the Volunteer Appreciation Event to be held on April 2. Those Commissioners who plan on attending are encouraged to RSVP to Denise Wollenberg.

Outgoing Commissioners

Chairperson, Andrew stated this evening is Commissioners Mark Hanna and Jim Hubert last RPAC meeting; Mark has filled the maximum terms to serve on a city commission and Jim has chosen to move on to other volunteer opportunities. Mark will continue his volunteer involvement with Tater Daze, Snowmobile Safety and other volunteer opportunities. In honor of their service to the city, both will be presented with plaques at the March 23, 2009 City Council meeting. Andrew thanked both commissioners for the wonderful work they have done serving on the RPAC over the years.

Mark stated he is going to miss everyone on the commission. He is proud to be a part of such a beautiful park system and is beholden to brag about it. Mark encouraged commissioners to visit the parks, talk to the people around the parks and remind them to keep an eye out and call 911 if they see illegal activity within the park. Mark thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve on the commission.

Jim stated his original expectations to learn about parks and tour the city facilities have been met. Jim stated it has been interesting working with three different directors stating it is good to see things moving forward and projects kept alive. Jim thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve on the commission.

Tater Daze

City Council Liaison, Dean Heng stated while vacationing in North Carolina, he attended a festival where the biggest customer draw was a dog dressing contest. Dean proposed this idea to the Tater Daze Committee and they approved it. Dean stated the ideal location for this contest would be the new Dog Park located in Brookdale Park.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion, Mark Hanna; Second, Jim Hubert, to adjourn. Motion unanimously approved.