

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2009
RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY COMMISSION

RPAC Commissioners and staff attended the Village Creek Grand Opening which began at 6:30 p.m., prior to the regularly scheduled RPAC meeting.

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

Commission Members present:

Ashley Anderson, Student Representative
Matthew Cooklock, At-Large
Reubenna Cooley, At-Large
James Driste, At-Large
Deborah Everson, At-Large
Dean Heng, City Council Liaison
John Holm, Planning Commission Liaison
Rob Jacobs, At-Large
Seyon Nyanwleh, At-Large
Jeanne Qualley, At-Large
Andrew Reinhardt, At-Large
Brian Rogers, At-Large

Commission Members absent:

James Brekke, At-Large
Paul Hartzell, At-Large
Kimberley Sundy, 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:

Christian Dube, Boy Scout

2. APPROVAL OF JUNE 17, 2009 RPAC AGENDA

Motion, Matthew Cooklock; Second, Jeanne Qualley, to add first on the agenda a proposal to approve an Eagle Scout project presented by Christian Dube. Motion unanimously approved.

3. APPROVAL OF MAY 20, 2009 RPAC MEETING MINUTES

Motion, Reubenna Cooley; Second, Matthew Cooklock, to approve the May 20, 2009 RPAC minutes. Motion unanimously approved.

Director, Jon Oyanagi introduced 13-year old Christian Dube, a local Boy Scout in troop #3542 entering the 9th grade at Champlin Park High School. Christian contacted Jon to discuss completing his Eagle Scout project in one of the city parks and Jon recommended Christian address the RPAC for their approval. Christian is here tonight to present his Eagle Scout project and passed out his proposal to build approximately 10 bat houses in Oak Grove Park:

- Construct up to 10 bat houses in a designated low traffic area within Oak Grove Park (west side of the grove trees by the picnic tables facing the Target property)
- The bat houses will be placed on poles 16 feet in height
- The poles will be wrapped with sheet metal every three feet to discourage raccoons and other rodents
- The bat houses will be painted black to help keep them warm and encourage a healthy bat population
- The project would be completed in August, 2009
- An informational plaque will be placed at the site

Christian provided Commissioners and staff with detailed background information on bats stating that bats are harmless if left alone; humans are benefited by the fact that they nightly eat their weight in insects; they reduce insect carrying disease including West Nile; each bat house can house 150-200 bats; bats reduce the number of insects making their surrounding habitat area pleasant; and when made available to them, bats will inhabit a bat house rather than residential home.

Following his presentation, Christian opened the floor to questions.

Commissioner, Rob Jacobs asked how much a typical bat weighs and how will the droppings will be handled. Christian stated bats typically weigh a few ounces. The bat houses would be built in an isolated and low traffic area of the park and by doing so droppings should not be a problem. In addition, the houses themselves require no maintenance if they are left undisturbed.

City Council Liaison, Dean Heng asked if Christian will seek donations to fund the project. Christian stated he has already been in contact with Lowe's in Maple Grove and they have agreed to sell him the scrap wood at cost. In addition, Christian will be collecting donations to complete the project. To save on labor costs Christian is recruiting some troop Webelos to assist him.

Student Representative, Ashley Anderson asked if there is a possibility of having too many bats. Christian stated no because only a limited number of bats can inhabit a house at any one time.

Commissioner, Matthew Cooklock asked how long the houses will last before they need to be replaced. Christian stated he is unsure of a time limit but that cedar wood would be used to construct the houses and treated lumber will be used for the poles.

Planning Commission Liaison, John Holm asked why the houses are not simply attached to the trees rather than on poles. Christian stated bats need to habitat in elevated and very warm quarters. Trees provide too much shade and are not warm enough for them.

Commissioner, Jeanne Qualley expressed her concern that young children may get hurt trying to stand on the rings that will surround the posts. Christian stated that the area selected will be located in an isolated area where kids would typically not be playing.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers asked how Christian planned on putting up the houses. Christian stated he will use 15-20 foot poles, place them in 3 foot holes using electric ropes to pull the poles up. Christian anticipates needing 10 volunteers to assist with the project and has contacted several leaders who will assist and lend tools for the project.

Commissioner, Seyon Nyanwleh asked if other Scouts have taken on constructing bat houses as their Eagle Scout project. Christian has not heard of this project being done and got the idea from a troop leader. Seyon asked if Christian would duplicate the project in other parks if his project is successful. Christian stated he would not although he would encourage other Scouts to do it.

Jon and Commissioners commended Christian on his proposal presentation and thanked him for attending this evening's meeting. If the Commissioners approve his project, Jon and Christian will set a time to meet at the site and discuss project details. Upon completion of the project, Jon suggested Christian provide a final report to the City Council.

Motion, Rob Jacobs; Second, Matthew Cooklock, to support Christian Dube's Eagle Scout project and accept his proposal to construct 10 bat houses in Oak Grove Park. Motion unanimously approved.

4. OLD BUSINESS

🌲 OFF-LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREA OPEN HOUSE

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated the off-leash dog area located in Brookdale Park has been open to the public since April 30, 2009 and asked Commissioners for any feedback they have received on the dog park. In addition, Councilmember Rich Gates and neighbors surrounding Brookdale Park are interested in holding a kick-off event so that more people are aware that the new dog park is open. Jon asked those Commissioners interested to sit on a subcommittee to plan for the open house.

Commissioners reported they have seen promotional materials on the dog park via their utility billing, Park Pages, billboard signage, city website and Channel 12.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers stated he has heard no negative comments from surrounding neighbors and although lightly used, it appears there are regular groups of people who consistently take their dogs to the area. Brian suggested combining the kick-off with the Elvis Concert on Thursday, August 20 and offer a bike registration for kids at the same time.

Jon stated staff has received a few complaints about the fence not surrounding the entire dog area and one incident of an owner walking his dog through the park when his dog was attacked by a dog running out of the off-leash area.

Commissioner, Seyon Nyanwleh stated he has visited the dog park at times when nobody was using the area and asked if there is a typical time when dog owners use the park. Brian stated dog owners typically use the park in the evening hours, anywhere from 6-9 p.m. In addition, you won't necessarily see cars, rather, the park is used as a 'drop-in' area or owners walk their dog down the street and back home.

Commissioners, Jeanne Qualley and Brian Rogers volunteered to serve on the Dog Park Open House subcommittee. Recreation & Services Manager, Jan Ficken stated the Hartz Company has offered to donate some treats and prizes for the open house.

Student Representative, Ashley Anderson asked if a Dog Park flyer could be put together to hand out during the Tater Daze Parade; if staff could contact Petco as a possibility sponsor for the fence; and if a survey on the Dog Park could be completed after it has been opened one full year. Jon stated all are possible.

YOUTH INITIATIVES UPDATE

Recreation & Services Manager, Jan Ficken introduced Brooklyn Park Police Captain, Jeff Ankerfelt. Both the Police and Recreation & Parks staff has been working on developing an evaluation and measurement plan for the Police and Zanewood Recreation Center (ZRC) collaboration. In addition, staff is working on combining recreation activities for young people and crime prevention intervention strategies. A draft of that plan and its scope was included in the Commission packet.

Jeff stated when looking at crime in Brooklyn Park, the Zane Corridor can be considered 'ground zero'. From the Police Department's perspective, it is ineffective to continue to do traditional policing in this area. The better idea is to collaborate with the Recreation & Parks Department who understands the value of programming and mentorship. By doing that we can change the crime in Brooklyn Park particularly pertaining to youth. The ZRC is a very important piece in that collaboration and serves as a safe place for youth and teens to gather. We see a lot of young people coming in off of the streets which is a good thing and we are using the ZRC to enhance our curfew for youth. For example, just recently several youth were out past curfew and picked up by officers. Amongst the group was an individual considered one of the city's top 20 trouble makers. He was brought to the ZRC where staff began the process to connect him with good mentors and provide helpful resources that may change his life. Jeff gave another recent example when some girls were walking down Zane Avenue and when stopped by an officer, they said they had met a guy at the Myth Nightclub in Maplewood and they were going to meet up with him later. The girls were brought to the ZRC and by removing them from the streets, kept them safe and lowered the likelihood of them being victimized. This is not standard policing as we know it and works well in a high crime area such as the Zane Corridor.

Jeff stated the Police Department is working in collaboration with the Center of Hope and Compassion, a group of African American men who are out in the community trying

to reach at-risk youth. This mentoring group will be easily identified this summer with their lime green shirts. The men are trained to do youth assessments, are meeting with the youth in the community and directing them back to the ZRC to get connected to programs and services.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers questioned whether the Brooklyn Park residents would be open to this urban approach with youth. Jeff stated although the city will carefully market this approach, it is important to recognize that Brooklyn Park is indeed facing many urban issues. Staff will track youth attendance to measure and understand the outcomes and benefits from this style of policing.

Commissioner, Matt Cooklock asked if other cities have followed this approach. Jeff stated the Police received assistance with the program through Hennepin County who has used this approach. In addition, the Youth Opportunities Coalition and NAP provided input and the plan was customized to meet the needs of Brooklyn Park. Jeff stated the Zane Corridor is the perfect area to set up a model that can be easily worked in and assessed.

Jeff stated the City Council, Police and Recreation & Parks Department has been discussing the need for reaching at-risk youth since 1991 and it is exciting to see this program finally take off. Jan stated since the inception of the NAP program the City has seen a double-digit decrease in crimes in those areas focused upon. Recreation Program Supervisor, Michelle Margo is working full time at the ZRC and in collaboration with an on-site Community Police Liaison Officer.

BASS CREEK PARK PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

Director, Jon Oyanagi reported that staff brought the Bass Creek Park playground equipment proposal to the City Council for their approval at their June 15, 2009 meeting. Parks & Facilities Manager, Mary Pat Black ordered the equipment today and it should arrive in four weeks. A slide, spring toy and twirly equipment were added for preschool age children and a photo of the modified design was included in the Commission packets. This plan provides a nice blend of outdoor play opportunities for children ages 6-12 years. The swing set will be moved from its existing area to the playground site in fall, 2009. City Councilmember, Rich Gates expressed concern with the \$25,000 playground equipment cost. Mary Pat stated all of the bids received were comparable in costs and none were excessive. This project should be completed by the end of July, 2009 and will meet the last of the required ADA park accessibility concerns.

MARKETING PLAN UPDATE

Recreation & Services Manager, Jan Ficken updated Commissioners that staff is working on the initiatives for media outlets and moving towards working with video. A video contest is being put in place entitled "I Love My Brooklyn Park". Program Supervisor, Gina Grynewski will head up the contest targeted specifically towards a marketing strategy to increase online marketing and video presence. The contest winner will be announced at the Zanewood Recreation Center Re-Grand Opening on Sunday, August 2. Jan asked that Commissioners spread the word of the contest. Jan also reported that M&I Bank has made a donation enabling the brooklynparkyouth.com website to remain up and running. Youth worker, Irving Brisco is responsible for that site and does a great job with it. City Council Liaison, Dean Heng asked if the website

tells us how many hits it receives. Jan responded in the affirmative. It was also reported that the Parks & Recreation webpage receives approximately 30,000 hits a month.

EDINBURGH USA NEW ROUGH MOWING POLICY

Parks & Facilities Manager, Mary Pat Black stated during the budget process last year, city staff toured the golf course and decided to let some of the natural areas grow in an effort to save \$10,000 in costs annually. In addition, Edinburgh USA lost two full time personnel last year due to budget cuts. Although some complaints could be anticipated, staff has received numerous telephone calls expressing concern about the changes in the mowing schedule from neighbors whose homes adjoin to the golf course. These residents keep their lawns in immaculate condition and, with the decreased mowing, the golf course lawn has grown longer in contrast to the lawns (photos were included in Commissioners packets). Some of the residents have begun cutting the golf course grass.

On Friday, June 12, Director, Jon Oyanagi; Mayor, Steve Lampi; and Council Members Peter Crema and Jeff Lunde toured the golf course. Discussion on whether or not to increase the mowing will be held at the June 22 City Council Meeting. Jon stated staff will propose that the mowing schedule be modified to mow once a week and leave some of the interior areas as 'no mow areas'.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt stated during the city budget discussions Councilmember Meyers suggested the Recreation & Parks budget could be cut by decreasing the grounds mowing. Now we are realizing the downside to decreasing the mowing.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers asked if there is a city ordinance in place against residents mowing the golf course. Jon responded there is and it is a liability issue. Planning Liaison, John Holm stated he doesn't think the golf course looks bad and asked if the residents had been informed prior to the change in the mowing schedule. Mary Pat stated they were not and it would have been helpful if that had been done.

Brian stated the golf course is the city's showcase spot and needs to maintain a good look and impression. Brian asked if there is a long range plan for the golf course where some native prairie plantings could be made. Jon stated there is not but that would be a good next step to take and involve the neighbors at that time.

City Council Liaison, Dean Heng stated when the grass is longer it takes longer to play the course and golfers complain about the speed of play. Jon stated Golf Manager, Don Berry has monitored this closely and has determined that the change in mowing schedule has not slowed the speed of play. Mary Pat stated staff has not received complaints from the golfers and the maintenance staff has cut some of the areas that could have been affected by speed of play.

JOINT GOAL-SETTING RECAP

Director, Jon Oyanagi followed up on the June 1 roundtable discussion with all city commissions and the City Council. Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt and Commissioners Brian Rogers, Matthew Cooklock and Reubenna Cooley attended the meeting and

represented the Commission well. Each Commission reported on their goals and the City Council suggested their own goals. Jon provided Commissioners with a summary memorandum from City Manager, Jamie Verbrugge.

Commissioner, Matthew Cooklock stated it was good to hear what the other City Commissions are doing. It was difficult to listen to Councilmember, Jeff Lunde's remark that the youth initiative is not effective and we should not waste city money on it. There was no background information to the remark and difficult to respond to. In addition, Council Members asked that the RPAC members bring more to the table and mentioned several items that could be addressed. Several of the items mentioned have already been addressed and reported on by the Commission.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt agreed with Matthew expressing his disappointment with the insulting remarks made to some of the Commissioners. Andrew stated the majority of the City Council Members have not attended a RPAC meeting and it was difficult to listen to some of their comments. Upon being asked that the RPAC members dig a bit more and think more out of the box, Andrew questioned whether the Council Members really understand the work that the RPAC members are doing and whether that is being communicated clearly to the Council. Andrew suggested that the RPAC meetings be more 'open ended' and revolve around problem solving versus reporting and power point presentations from staff.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers stated although he was prepared to give a complete update on the Youth Opportunities Coalition, he was disappointed when Mayor Lampi asked what the Youth Opportunities Coalition was. Brian stated the Coalition has been in place for two years and it was his understanding that the Mayor was well informed on it. Brian stated he was insulted by some of the remarks made by City Council Members and stated the RPAC has discussed and worked on many new initiatives and ideas including a department marketing plan, youth initiatives, dog park, splash pad, signature park, community garden, long range plans, and he is very proud of the work the RPAC Members do. Brian expressed his disappointment in the meeting process and will not plan on attending future meetings.

Commissioner, Reubenna Cooley stated it may be helpful in the future to review the results of the measurement plan.

Jon stated the City Manager feels it is difficult to get good dialogue going and issues addressed in such a large group setting and will be looking at changing the format for future meetings.

Parks & Facilities Manager, Mary Pat Black thanked Commissioners for their feedback and expressing that they would prefer less reporting and more dialogue and problem solving. Jon stated staff has gradually introduced new discussion items at each RPAC meeting and can accelerate that. Jon stated the City is currently going through an organizational study and several groups will be working on a variety of goals including increasing volunteer involvement. Commissioners will likely be asked to sit on one or more focus group.

Commissioner, Rob Jacobs asked if there are things that the Commissioners can do to advance an agenda item with the City Council, such as the signature park concept, or is that too high a hurdle to accomplish without the City Council's active commitment. Jon stated it would be helpful to have a particular project in place before presenting it to the City Council. Right now we are trying to create a design element so that when the opportunity for a signature park comes we are ready to move on it. City Council Liaison, Dean Heng stated that the City Council has discussed the signature park concept several times and would like to see something constructed along Hwy. 610.

Jon stated City Council Members demand some interesting variety in designs and plans when staff or Commissioners bring ideas forward. Planning Commission Liaison, John Holm agreed stating the Planning Commission does not want developers proposing the same 'cookie cutter' designs as in the past by stating they cannot afford the same design requirements demanded by surrounding cities. John shared the newest Wal-Mart development as an example. When approached by the developers, their original plan included a straight forward, square, blasé addition. The Planning Commission stressed their desire that it be constructed along the same design lines as the Maple Grove Wal-Mart. Two weeks later, developers proposed a new design plan that was acceptable and much nicer than their original plans.

5. NEW BUSINESS

EIDEM HOMESTEAD – RICH WILLIAMS

Recreation Manager, Jan Ficken announced the hiring of a new part-time site coordinator at Eidem Homestead, Rich Williams. Rich replaces two 30-year employees who have recently retired, Kay Grotenhuis and Connie Englert. Rich comes to us with over 35 years experience as a history guide who loves working with kids and school groups and is excited to share his knowledge with our community.

FALL/WINTER PROGRAM IDEAS

Recreation Manager, Jan Ficken stated staff is now developing programs and information for the fall recreation brochure. This falls programming theme is 'children and nature' and encourages people to use the parks, trails, and outdoor nature activities. Staff works with the Three Rivers Park District in developing outdoor programs that focus on families recreating together. The Community Activity Center (CAC) is heavily used all year round and offers affordable, accessible activities and family opportunities during the winter months. Jan welcomed Commissioners to share their program ideas and thoughts with her at any time. City Council Liaison, Dean Heng asked if sleigh rides are offered at the Eidem Homestead during the winter months. Jan stated hayrides, with a team of horses and a wagon, are offered during the winter. Using runner sleighs have been more difficult the past few years due to limited snowfall.

JULY TOUR PREVIEW

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated that traditionally the RPAC Parks Tour has been held annually in July and opened the floor to discussion for this year's tour. Following input and suggestions from Commissioners, the following sites were recommended for the July 15, 2009 Parks Tours:

Artificial turf sites at Park Center
City tennis courts
Lakeland Park
Monroe Park
Central Park
Norwood Park

 UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◇ June 18, Tater Daze Parade
- ◇ List of upcoming events (handed out)
- ◇ Tater Daze Softball Tournament, 5K Run and Fun Run (handed out Tater Daze Events Brochure)
- ◇ The Recreation and Parks float for the Tater Daze Parade is unit #18 and is open to all staff, instructors, families and Commissioners.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion, James Driste; Second, Deborah Everson, to adjourn. Motion unanimously approved.