

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2009  
RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY COMMISSION

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

Commission Members present:

Reubenna Cooley, At-Large  
James Driste, At-Large  
Deborah Everson, At-Large  
Paul Hartzell, At-Large  
John Holm, Planning Commission Liaison  
Snoti Jappah, Student Representative  
Seyon Nyanwleh, At-Large  
Brian Rogers, At-Large  
Jeanne Qualley, At-Large  
Andrew Reinhardt, At-Large

Commission Members absent:

James Brekke, At-Large  
Matthew Cooklock, At-Large  
Dean Heng, City Council Liaison  
Rob Jacobs, At-Large  
Kimberley Sundy, At-Large

Others present:

Jo Roberts, CEO/Link Associates

Staff Members present:

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

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

**Motion, Brian Rogers; Second, James Driste, to approve the November 18, 2009 RPAC agenda. Motion unanimously approved.**

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

**Motion, Seyon Nyanwleh; Second, Brian Rogers, to approve the October 21, 2009 RPAC minutes amended as follows:** Commissioner, Seyon Nyanwleh asked if the names of those Commissioners voting 'nay' on a motion be reflected in the RPAC minutes; Planning Commissioner, John Holm began discussion regarding the Mills Fleet Farm which was tabled for a future RPAC meeting. **Motion unanimously approved.**

4. **INTRODUCTION OF STUDENT COMMISSIONER**

Director, Jon Oyanagi introduced newly appointed Student Representative, Snoti Jappah. Snoti is a Brooklyn Park resident attending Columbia Heights Senior High School. Snoti was choir president and on the school dance team. Snoti stated she is very excited to be a part of the Recreation & Parks Advisory Commission. Chair Person, Andrew Reinhardt welcomed Snoti to the Commission and expressed the Commissioner's appreciation of her choosing to serve on the Commission.

## 5. OLD BUSINESS

### MRPA BOARD & COMMISSION SYMPOSIUM

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated the MRPA Board and Commission Symposium was held in Rosemount on Tuesday, November 10. Director Oyanagi and RPAC Commissioners, Brian Rogers, Matthew Cooklock, Rob Jacobs and Andrew Reinhardt attended the symposium. Jon stated the attendees broke out into smaller groups to discuss what is happening in each of their cities. Other presentations included changing demographics, immigrants, people of diversity and local laws. MRPA lobbyist, Doug Carnival spoke on what the process is for making laws and how citizens can make a difference in this process.

Commissioner Rogers stated he took away from the meeting the changing demographics of parks and recreation and the importance in always looking at new ways of how those demographics will play out in the future. For example, Brian asked if swim lessons are offered for different communities and cultures such as the Muslim community. Jon stated they are not, but that it is interesting that laws for women from Pakistan differ from region to region wherein some have to cover up in front of males while others do not. Brian stated it is important that the city in general keep these differing cultures, laws and traditions on their radar.

Brian stated it was interesting to learn Brooklyn Park does not have a monopoly on money problems and that many other cities are facing the same economic downturn as Brooklyn Park is. There was a great deal of discussion on ways to come up with money. Brian found the symposium very interesting and plans on attending future meetings.

Chair Person, Andrew Reinhardt stated there were a number of city managers throughout the metropolitan area in attendance and it was interesting to compare other cities with Brooklyn Park. Comments made by others included how high property values have risen making it impossible for cities to purchase land, and how lucky Brooklyn Park is that the City Council had the foresight to purchase property in the past and has the opportunity to swap land now. Jon stated a symposium is not scheduled next year because the National (NRPA) Conference will be held here in Minneapolis October 25 – 29. Jon stated this is a great opportunity for all board members to find out what is going on both nationally, and internationally. The conference is expensive and Commissioners should be thinking about that and commit to attend when they sign up.

### OFF-LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREA REVIEW

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated the pilot project off-leash dog exercise area in Brookdale Park opened in spring 2009. A fence was erected, signs posted at both entrances, with waste containers and dispensers provided. The dog area was marketed throughout the city via a variety of sources including Sun Post, Channel 12, Star & Tribune, brochures, and flyers. In addition, an Open House was held in August with Hartz, Windstar Pet Grooming and PETCO in attendance to support the new dog exercise area. Approximately 100 people attended the event. Since then, 50 surveys from the public using the dog park were obtained over several days. Jon asked for input from the Commissioners regarding how the pilot project has gone so far; whether the area should continue to be offered to the public; if so, how do we adapt it to make it as nice as possible; and should we continue to keep the dog park area open to the public on a year round basis.

Jon stated one of the most common requests obtained via the surveys was that the entire area should be fenced off. It would cost approximately \$17,600 to fence the entire area off and

install control gates at both entrances. In addition, a light post has been suggested and that would cost approximately \$4,000.

Commissioner, Paul Hartzell asked if the \$4,000 is the cost to install the light, or to install and maintain it. Jon replied the cost would cover the installation only although the electricity to run it would be minimal. Paul stated his support to install a fence around the entire dog park as it would increase the number of dog owners using the area.

Commissioner, James Driste asked if the fence would enclose the sliding hill also. Jon replied it would. The fencing would go around the sliding hill.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt stated that Channel 9 News recently reported that although the City of Plymouth will continue requiring dogs and cats to have their yearly shots and a name tag, they will stop requiring a license for dog and cat owners unless they have four or more pets. This was a budget decision due to the cost in staff time to issue those licenses. Andrew stated if the City of Brooklyn Park continues to require people to purchase a license that would be the opportune time to charge them a dog park fee. In addition he would like to know how many licenses the city issues each year.

Commissioner, Seyon Nyanwleh asked how many surrounding cities have off-leash dog parks. Jon responded he did not have the exact number but that there are many off-leash dog parks. Seyon suggested \$21,000 is too much money for the city to spend installing fencing and lighting at the dog park. Andrew responded that obviously, every penny spent is important but Commissioners should consider when they talk about the cost to install a tennis court, that cost is \$100,000 and serves a lesser amount of people than the dog park does. Additionally, compare the cost in constructing a facility within ADA compliance that is not used nearly as much as the dog park does. Compared to that, this cost for fencing and lighting is very low. Jon stated he does not think the cost is unreasonable but that it is up to the Commission to decide that and make their recommendation to the City Council.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers stated to make any improvements to the park the dog park would have to have a lot of people using it and be self-sustaining. Brian suggested several ways money could be generated for the dog park including providing a pay box with envelopes at the park asking for donations to the upkeep of the park; creating a dog park club wherein a pass or bumper fee is charged; charge an annual fee along the same lines as the Community Gardens wherein gardeners were charged a rental fee which went towards the fencing costs resulting in no cost to the city; and dollars generated from cell towers could be used for improvements to the dog park.

Commissioner, Seyon Nyanwleh stated the City should cover the costs of the dog park rather than residents or individuals accessing the park.

Brian also stated a definite improvement has been made to Brookdale Park byway of establishing the dog park area resulting in a significantly lower amount of vandalism in the park.

Andrew stated he would like to see some information on what the dog park is actually costing the city. Jon stated that information can be obtained and provided at next month's meeting.

Planning Commissioner Liasion, John Holm stated the dog park area is one more amenity that will bring people out to the park and suggested maybe PETCO would like to sponsor a section of the fence and signage could be installed on the fence announcing their donation.

Commissioner, Deborah Everson stated one of the fun things about Minneapolis's largest dog park is the fact that it is not fenced in. She stated there are a lot of parks in Brooklyn Park and she would like to see dedicating some of them strictly as dog parks without charging a fee to use them. This could be done easily, especially in those parks with little, or no, use by the public. In addition, Deborah stated it would cost more in administrative time to collect \$5 per dog, per year, to use the dog park and suggested that the city should forgo a charge while going full force with designing dog parks in other parks throughout the city and fund the maintenance for those dog areas by selling a variety of 'pet stuff' with the Brooklyn Park logo on it. Commissioner, James Driste stated pet owners should be automatically granted use of the dog park upon purchasing their annual license.

Seyon stated that all public areas in the city should be open to all residents including the dog park area. He stated residents should not be charged a dog park fee if they don't own a dog or live near the dog park. Only those using the dog park should be charged. Parks & Facilities Manager, Mary Pat Black stated everyone does have access to the park. It doesn't matter if you own a dog, have children, etc., you still have access to the park.

Andrew asked how the sliding hill and dog park can be offered to the public simultaneously through the winter months. Brian suggested cutting off a section of the dog park area with a temporary fencing in addition to the fencing currently in place. That way both the dogs and hill sliders could enjoy the park at the same time. Brian suggested staff provide some photographs of the area and discuss this further at the December RPAC meeting. James agreed stating any decision made wouldn't affect the city budget until 2011. Jon reminded Commissioners that the park development fund does have some money that could be used for improvements right now.

Following further discussion and input from staff and Commissioners, the following motions were entertained:

**Motion, Brian Rogers; Second, Deborah Everson, to continue maintaining the dog park at its current location within Brookdale Park.**

**Motion, Brian Rogers; Second, Reubenna Cooley to open the dog park to the public for winter usage. Motion unanimously approved.**

**Motion, Brian Rogers; Second, Reubenna Cooley to establish a focus group to discuss future plans for dog parks throughout the city. Motion unanimously approved.**

Seyon asked if a conflict exists if Commissioners form the focus group, versus the residents or groups contacting the RPAC first. Mary Pat stated the Recreation & Parks Department staff will facilitate the focus group, not the RPAC. Jon stated there is no conflict in contacting those people who indicated on their survey that they would be interested in joining a focus group. Reubenna asked if establishing the focus group will be advertised. Jon responded that it would.

### **BAT HOUSES**

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated Commissioners had requested an update on the Oak Grove Park bat house project that Boy Scout, Christian Dube completed in the summer, 2009. Jon provided photos depicting how the project was completed. In total the scouts built nine bat

houses located in a meadow area on the edge of the woods just west of the picnic pavilion. Christian will notify Jon when the Eagle Scout ceremony will be held.

## 6. NEW BUSINESS

### WORK PLAN – 2010

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated that each year the Commissioners and staff generate a work plan for the following year. The agenda items are spread out over 11 months making sure the Commission touches on everything included in the plan. Commissioners were provided a draft of the 2010 work plan to be discussed tonight and finalized at the December RPAC meeting. Jon opened the floor to discussion, ideas, additions, deletions or changes to the plan.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers asked what the date is for the NRPA conference. Jon stated it is scheduled for October 25 – 29.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt stated the City Council has suggested that rather than having a parade of one department after another presenting to them throughout the year, it would be more valuable to have all departments present at one time. In addition, they have expressed their desire to be challenged by the city commissions.

Brian responded that the RPAC work plan has to reflect to the City Council the work the Commission does. Brian expressed his concern that at the Monday, November 16 City Council meeting some Council members said they are thinking about selling off Noble Sports Park. Commissioner, Deborah Everson asked if that is due to financial reasons or something else. Brian stated that the impression made was that they do not want to put any more money into Noble Sports Park because it is a valuable piece of real estate that could be sold in the future. Brian expressed the importance in paying attention to what the City Council is discussing and where their position stands on parks in general. The RPAC work sessions need to include taking a look at, and structuring for, a long term park & recreation plan; plans on how we are going to sustain parks & recreation; and how we are going to fund parks & recreation.

Deborah stated she realizes the economy changes over time but questions Council members wanting to sell a park. She asked if it is possible for the Council to approve sale of a park. Parks & Facilities Manager, Mary Pat Black stated although there are cities that do have ordinances in place that state park property cannot be sold unless it is replaced acre for acre, Brooklyn Park does not have such an ordinance.

Jon stated that although staff can have the opinion on what parks, if any, should be sold, what proves effective is if the commission voices their opinion. Brian stated it is his intention to get the word out on what was discussed at the Monday meeting.

Commissioner, James Driste stated the work plan is just a draft and it is helpful that it can be changed throughout the year.

Commissioner, Seyon Nyanwleh stated there is one Annual Joint Goal Setting Meeting with the City Council scheduled. He stated Commissioner Rogers has raised a serious concern that will take more than one meeting to discuss and asked if it is possible to schedule additional meetings with the Council. Jon stated when there are specific issues such as selling Noble Sports Park, they are added to the City Council agenda for discussion. In addition, Council member, Dean Heng attends every City Council meeting and serves on the RPAC as Liaison to the City Council. This is helpful in providing input and feedback both to and from the City Council and RPAC.

Brian asked if an August meeting could tentatively be scheduled. Jon responded in the affirmative.

## 7. **DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW**

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated that the Mills Fleet Farm discussion has been tabled until the December, 2009 RPAC meeting.

## 8. **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

Director, Jon Oyanagi provided Commissioners with a calendar of upcoming events for November and December, 2009.

## 9. **OTHER ITEMS BY COMMISSION**

### **Eidem Homestead – Old Fashion Christmas**

Director, Jon Oyanagi invited Commissioners to attend the annual Old Fashion Christmas at the Farm event which will be held on Saturday and Sunday, December 5 & 6, from 1 – 4 p.m.

### **Lions Waffle Breakfast with Santa**

Director, Jon Oyanagi invited Commissioners to attend the Brooklyn Park Lions Waffle Breakfast with Santa. This annual event will be held from 7:30 a.m. to Noon on Saturday, December 7.

### **CEAP**

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated the Community Activity Center serves as an official CEAP donation site and encouraged those Commissioners who are interested to drop off their food and/or toy donations under the Christmas tree located in the front entryway of the CAC. Donations will be accepted through December 31.

### **Winter Brochure**

Director, Jon Oyanagi stated the new winter recreation brochure was delivered to homes this week. Planning Commission Liaison, John Holm noted that the new dog park was not advertised in the brochure. Parks & Facilities Manager, Mary Pat Black responded that was because the dog park was a pilot program and during brochure preparations, it was unknown if the RPAC and City Council would approve continuing with the dog park and if so, at what location. Commissioner, Brian Rogers commended the staff on how nice the brochure looks.

### **Community Cafe**

Director, Jon Oyanagi handed out the Community Café rave cards. These community listening sessions will be held at City Hall on Saturday, December 5. Three sessions are scheduled at 9 a.m., 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. The Neighborhood Livability team is holding these sessions to gather information from a variety of sources on what makes neighborhoods great and what would make it better. This is a great opportunity for Commissioners to encourage their neighbors to attend a meeting and express their thoughts and feelings. Childcare and transportation will be available. The Neighborhood Livability team will be gathering input from residents from these and other efforts leading to the core team, evaluation team, and action team concept Chief Michael Davis presented to the RPAC in September.

### **Other Items**

Commissioner, Seyon Nyanwleh introduced Jo Roberts, CEO & Founder of Link Associates, a rental consulting group located in Brooklyn Center. Ms. Roberts stated Link Associates are putting together a map of the city and, as a resident, has found there is a huge disconnect between Brooklyn Park, their residents and surrounding communities. Link Associates manages 230 homes and she stated if residents voices really count, she along with many residents residing in these homes wish to be heard. She works with the youth in the city and finds that no one talks to one another and is very disconnected. She wonders how she can encourage the youth to come to Brooklyn Park and is here tonight to challenge everyone to get connected.

In addition Ms. Roberts stated she has the impression that when it comes to Brooklyn Park parks, it's all about money. She is concerned that we are losing ourselves in our city parks and really need to connect with the community.

Commissioner, Brian Rogers asked Ms. Roberts to define the word 'disconnect'. Ms. Roberts responded that during this evening's earlier discussion regarding the possible sale of Noble Sports Park, Brian made the remark "we are good at not telling anyone" while referencing how the city keeps things from residents. That defines the word 'disconnect'. She stated the City Council was disrespectful to discuss such a sale without first asking for feedback from staff and residents.

Brian responded that in actuality, the City Council often asks for feedback from residents and responds to their concerns, comments, and questions. He stated his earlier remarks were made in an effort to report to the Commissioners that there is talk out there about Noble Sports Park.

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt stated that Commissioners are glad Ms. Roberts attended this evenings meeting and thanked her for her time. Andrew asked that Commissioners continue to encourage others to attend any of the RPAC meetings which are always open to the public. Ms. Roberts responded that she thinks the RPAC is doing a great job and she supports whatever work has to be done to get things accomplished. In addition, she stated she has a youth crew that would be available to assist wherever needed.

#### **December, 2009 RPAC Meeting**

Director, Jon Oyanagi reminded Commissioners that the December 16, 2009 RPAC will be held in conjunction with the traditional holiday social. Those who would like may bring a treat or appetizer to share.

#### **Jim Ebert**

Chairperson, Andrew Reinhardt announced the recent passing of Jim Ebert, long time volunteer and resident of the city. Jim was well known throughout the community and held up the standard for volunteerism in the city. His active volunteerism was renowned throughout numerous city organizations and groups including serving on the Lions Club for 38 years, former RPAC Commissioner, and Senior Club member. Commissioner, James Driste was interviewed on Channel 12 and provided a wonderful rendering of Jim Ebert's accomplishments. Jim's passing is a big loss for Brooklyn Park residents.

#### **10. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion, Seyon Nyanwleh; Second, Deborah Everson, to adjourn. Motion unanimously approved.**