



MINUTES
Parks, Recreation and Environmental Commission
February 3, 2021 City Hall
Council Chambers 6:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Johnson. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this meeting was held virtually.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas introduced herself to the Commission. She thanked the Commission members for their service to the community. She stated the Parks Master Plan was amazing and she appreciated this group's efforts on that document. She discussed how rough 2020 has been on New Brighton residents and thanked Director Fink for being creative and for coming up with ideas to get people outdoors. She reported the City would be creating an Inclusive Community Committee later this summer and noted a staff member would be hired to oversee inclusive initiatives on behalf of the City.

II. Roll Call:

Members Present: Commissioners Pauline Alfors, Gary Bank, Amelia Kuiper, Matt Johnson (Chair), Abe McEathron, Julia O'Rourke, Mike Santi, and Charles Warner.

Members Absent: None.

Also Present: Director Jennifer Fink; Candace Amberg, WSB; Councilmember Emily Dunsworth (joined the meeting at 7:00 p.m.) and Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas.

III. Approval of Agenda

Motion by McEathron, seconded by Santi to approve the agenda as presented. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried 8-0.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Chair Johnson noted two minor grammatical changes that should be made to Page 2 of the minutes.

Motion by McEathron, seconded by O'Rourke to approve the January 6, 2021 minutes as amended. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried 7-0-1 (Commissioner Kuiper abstained).

V. Business Items

A. Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Grant for Hansen Park – Jennifer Fink, Director of Parks and Recreation and Candace Amberg, WSB

Director Fink stated in 2018 and 2020, the City authorized the application to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for the Outdoor Recreation Grant for Hansen Park. However the City's application was not granted. In 2018, the Parks and Recreation Department was scheduled to replace fencing and backstops at Hansen Park for the two remaining youth fields at Hansen Park through the Non-Fleet Capital Asset Replacement Fund. A decision was made to delay those replacements in order to wait for the outcomes from the Parks Comprehensive Plan. Due to soil conditions and field location, rain and water often impact playability, cause field damage, which result in increased cancelations.

Director Fink explained with the completion and adoption of Parks and Recreation System Plan, the Parks and Recreation Department is proposing an application to the DNR to help facilitate the completion of a portion of the approved Hansen Park Master plan. For the purposes of this grant, the submitted proposal includes reorientation of the north ballfield to an ideal direction for play (northeast). Each ballfield will be re-sized to 200' with grading and drainage improvements to accommodate play. The layout also includes a paved multi-use 8' wide trail connection to each field and expanded spectator areas with bleachers. Small play pods with one or two play features (such as swings) would be located near the spectator area for younger children watching games. There is also an option to fit a multipurpose field on the north ballfield. Parking lots will be consolidated into one lot with 119 stalls including accessible parking and sidewalks. Improvements to the popular disc golf course include a redesigned entrance, first hole and upgrades to existing tee boxes for consistency. An open-air shelter just south of the parking lot provides a separate gathering area for disc golf and space for group events.

Director Fink reported in an effort to improve the chances of a favorable outcome in our grant application, the City has an agreement with WSB to assist in the grant application. This grant requires a cash match and is a reimbursement grant. The City would complete the project and fully pay for it and produce documents that show the actual expenditures and proper procurement process had been followed. The City would utilize funds from the closed bond fund, Non-Fleet Capital Asset Replacement Plan, pavement management plan and payments made to the City from the Rice Creek Watershed District for the Hansen Park project to pay the matching portion of the project. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has funds available to assist with projects through their Outdoor Recreation Grant Program. A fifty (50) percent match is required from the City, with a maximum permissible request of \$250,000 for state funds. The local share can consist of cash or the value of materials, labor and equipment usage by the City. In order to be eligible for a 2021 grant, applications are due by March 27, 2021. The grant application requires a resolution, council minutes, or other official documentation that demonstrates that the local unit of government supports the proposed project and the consequent application. Staff reviewed the proposed costs for the project and requested feedback from the Commission.

Discussion included:

- The Commission asked if a basketball court would be installed at Hansen Park. Staff reported basketball courts would be installed at Totem Park.
- The Commission questioned if the park would have natural grass or synthetic turf. Staff explained the park would have natural grass.
- The Commission requested further comment regarding the park shelter. Staff discussed the proposed park shelter in further detail.

Motion by McEathron, seconded by Bank to recommend that the City Council adopt the resolution authorizing the application for a 2021 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Outdoor Recreation Grant. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried 8-0.

VI. Announcements

A. City Council Report – Councilmember Emily Dunsworth

Councilmember Dunsworth provided the Commission with an update from the City Council. She explained the Council recently received a presentation from staff on the Zoning Code Update. She noted a steering committee would be formed to assist with this project and explained this project would take the next year to complete. She encouraged those interested in serving on this steering committee to contact City staff. She indicated the Council also worked at setting their worksession schedule for 2021.

B. PREC Chair Updates – Matt Johnson

Chair Johnson requested Commissioners contact him or Director Fink with potential meeting topics for 2021.

C. Department Happenings and Upcoming Events – City Staff

Director Fink stated the City was now offering residents an “Every Meal Bag” at the New Brighton Community Center. She explained these bags have four to five pounds of shelf stable goods and can be picked up by anyone in the community now through the end of the school year. She noted the Mission Possible program came to an end in January. She discussed the Adventures program and how it would be changing this summer. She reported the City looking to expand its playground program to more parks this summer. She indicated staff was investigating how to safely reopen the Eagle’s Nest through an exclusive use rental program that would allow residents to rent the Eagle’s Nest for two hours. She commented a small pocket park was being planned for the new Midtown Village development. She discussed how staff was prepping for the upcoming golf season. Lastly, she reported aquatics began this week at High View Middle School.

VII. Adjournment

Motion by Bank, seconded by Santi to adjourn the meeting at 7:21 p.m. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried 8-0.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Fink". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Fink

Director of Parks and Recreation