



MINUTES

Parks, Recreation and Environmental Commission

December 1, 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.

II. Roll Call:

Members Present: Commissioners Pauline Alfors, Gary Bank, Kristin Hicks, Matt Johnson (Chair), Julia O'Rourke, Lara Sokol-Kraft, and Michael Spooner.

Members Absent: Commissioners Amelia Kuiper and Charles Warner.

Also Present: Director Jennifer Fink; DEI Coordinator Mark Suggs; and Council Member Emily Dunsworth.

III. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Bank, seconded by Spooner to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried 7-0.

IV. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Hicks, seconded by Spooner to approve the October 6, 2021 minutes as presented. Motion carried 7-0.

V. Business Items

A. Introduction of New Commissioner – Jennifer Fink, Director of Parks and Recreation

Director Fink welcomed Laura Sokol-Kraft to the Commission.

Commissioner Sokol-Kraft introduced herself to the Commission and stated she was looking forward to serving the community.

B. Introduction of City Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator – Jennifer Fink, Director of Parks and Recreation and Mark Suggs, DEI Coordinator

Director Fink introduced DEI Coordinator Mark Suggs to the Commission and discussed his work history. The changing demographics in the community was reviewed along with how PREC would be working to integrate DEI efforts into parks and recreation activities.

DEI Coordinator Mark Suggs thanked the Commission for their time. He described the work he did in the school district for years, stating he had a real passion for families. He explained he was humbled to be working for the City because it was a community he loved. He discussed how busy his first month has been, noting he was working to complete an Equity Strategic Action Plan. He explained he would be casting a wide net and would be working in the community to get to know the people he would be serving. He indicated he would be working on a resource library at City Hall for employees.

Discussion included:

- The Commission encouraged Mr. Suggs to consider participating in the clubs at Irondale and Mounds View High Schools.
- The Commission welcomed Mr. Suggs and thanked him for his dedicated service to the City of New Brighton.

C. Review Work Plan for 2022 in Preparation for Council Presentation – Jennifer Fink, Director of Parks and Recreation

Director Fink reviewed the proposed work plan generated after the October meeting. It was noted this information will be useful for when the PREC Chair presents information to the Council on Commission accomplishments and work plan for 2022. She explained she would like to spend more time onboarding new Commissioners going forward. She stated a joint meeting between the EDC and PREC may be considered in the future to discuss place making signage.

Discussion included:

- Councilmember Dunsworth explained the City Council was interested in pursuing more ways to encourage cross collaboration between commissions.

VI. Announcements

A. City Council Report – Council Member Emily Dunsworth

Councilmember Dunsworth provided the Commission with an update from the City Council. She commented the items that were recently discussed by the Council, which included an over sized garage. She noted the Council would be holding its Truth in Taxation Hearing on Tuesday, December 7.

B. PREC Chair Updates – Matt Johnson

Chair Johnson thanked staff for their efforts on the Pumpkin Walk.

C. Department Happenings and Upcoming Events – City Staff

Director Fink stated the gnomes were back out at Hansen Park. She discussed the numbers during Thanksgiving week at the Community Center, noting people were coming back. She reported Jeff Johnson was hired to replace Bill Bach and noted Jeff has been a great addition to the Parks and Recreation Department. She explained she just got back from Birmingham, Alabama for a Sports ETA conference. She discussed how the City was working to update its ADA plan for the community with regards to sidewalks and trails. She described how the City would be working with Reach for Resources in order to provide adaptive programming for Parks and Recreation programs. She noted vaccine clinics were being held on Wednesdays at the Community Center for booster shots and children ages 5 to 11. She reported the golf course was now closed after having the highest number of rounds in any one season since 2015. She indicated registration was now open for winter programming.

VII. Adjournment

Motion by Bank, seconded by Sokol-Kraft to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.

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