



## MINUTES

### Parks, Recreation and Environmental Commission

March 2, 2022 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.

#### II. Roll Call:

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

Members Absent: Commissioner Charles Warner.

Also Present: Director Jennifer Fink; Candace Amberg with WSB; and Council Member Emily Dunsworth.

#### III. Approval of Agenda

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

#### IV. Approval of Minutes

Motion by O'Rourke, seconded by Hicks to approve the February 2, 2022 minutes as presented. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried 7-0-1 (Chair Johnson abstained).

#### V. Business Items

##### A. Lions Park Splash Pad

Director Fink and shared an update on the site plan for Lions Park and potential concepts for a splash pad. She reviewed an aerial of Lions Park noting the railroad was planning to put up a fence for safety purposes and noted this could impact future trails. She discussed the location of the restroom facilities and noted they would be operational in 2022. It was noted the adjacent pond would be used for drainage purposes and irrigation within Lions Park.

Discussion included:

- The Commission asked if the pond within Lions Park was fenced and it was noted the pond was not fenced, nor would it be fenced going forward.

- The group held a discussion on potential engagement opportunities with the public for this project.
- The Commission recommended shade options be considered near the playground and within the splash pad.
- It was noted all options would be ADA accessible.
- The different themes that could be chosen for the splash pad were described. The Commission supported the natural option because it would fit in with the natural surroundings within the park and would be a unique splash pad for the community.
- Staff anticipated the splash pad could be installed late this fall or early next spring.
- The Commission requested staff reach out to the public to see what their feedback would be regarding the splash pad.

## **B. Totem Pole Park Project**

Director Fink shared an update on the Totem Pole Park project. She reported staff would be applying for a grant for \$300,000 for this park. She reviewed the potential site plans for Totem Pole Park which included an open air picnic shelter with permanent restrooms or a medium sized neighborhood center. In addition, a playground with seating, full sized basketball court, Bankshot, four pickleball courts, improved ballfield, paved 8' wide trail loop, and off-street parking lot and improved accessibility were also being considered for this park. Staff commented on the preliminary budget for the project and requested feedback from the Commission.

Discussion included:

- The Commission asked if the plan was to tear down the existing building at the park. Staff noted this was the case.
- The benefits of having intergenerational sporting options at this park was discussed.
- The Commission recommended staff reconnect with the neighborhood in order to make them aware of what is coming at Totem Pole Park.
- The name of this park was discussed and staff noted a scout in the community recreated the original totem pole that was onsite.
- The Commission asked what the timeline was for this project. Staff indicated the project would be completed by the fall of 2023.

Motion by Bank, seconded by Sokol-Kraft to recommend the City Council move forward with the site plan for Totem Pole Park as indicated for application to the MnDNR. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carried 8-0.

## **C. Sunny Square Park Project**

Director Fink shared an update on the Sunny Square Park project. She reviewed the potential site plans for Sunny Square Park which included an open air picnic shelter with permanent restrooms or a medium sized neighborhood center. In addition, ballfield improvements, play area, consolidated parking lots, paved 8' wide trail loop, open lawn area for informal recreation, a trail connection to Rice creek Regional Trail West, a monument sign and stormwater improvements were also being considered for this park. Staff commented on the preliminary budget for the project and requested feedback from the Commission.

Discussion included:

- The Commission supported this park having an open air shelter versus a neighborhood center.
- The Commission commented on the value of the bike fixing stations. Staff explained these were typically located on or near regional trails because they have higher traffic.
- The Commission appreciated the new design for this park stating it was well thought out and would have better function.
- The timeline for this project was reviewed with the Commission and it was noted construction would begin in August of this year with the park being completed later this year.

#### **D. Commissioner Recognition**

Chair Johnson recognized Commissioner Kuiper and Commissioner Warner and thanked each of them for their dedicated service to PREC.

### **VI. Announcements**

#### **A. City Council Report – Council Member Emily Dunsworth**

Councilmember Dunsworth provided the Commission with an update from the City Council. She reported she was not at the last Council meeting because she was on a much needed vacation. She thanked Commissioner Kuiper and Commissioner Warner for their service to the City. She indicated the City Council held Commission interviews at their March 1 worksession meeting and she was pleased to report four students had interviewed for Commission positions. She noted the City Council was still seeking additional volunteers to join their Commissions. Those interested were encouraged to apply with the City. She reported on Saturday, March 5 the Council would be holding a strategic planning session.

#### **B. PREC Chair Updates – Matt Johnson**

Chair Johnson reported he presented an annual update from PREC to the City Council several weeks ago. He explained the City Council sends along their thanks for PREC's efforts. He noted the Council also appreciated PREC's efforts to focus on sustainability, equity and accessibility.

#### **C. Department Happenings and Upcoming Events – City Staff**

Director Fink stated the April PREC meeting will be hybrid, which meant there would be both virtual and in person options for attendance. She reported the skating season had come to an end. She reviewed the skating numbers from Hansen and Freedom Parks and noted there were more than 12,000 skaters this winter. She indicated golf league registration was now available. She stated summer programs were also filling up. She noted the mask mandate at all City buildings had been lifted as of March 1. She explained staff was working to hire summer seasonal workers and conducted a hiring event at Irondale High School. She discussed a speaking event she took part in at the White Bear Lake High School. She reported a joint meeting with the EDC was being planned for July.

**VII. Adjournment**

Motion by Bank, seconded by Kuiper to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 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 with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jennifer Fink  
Director of Parks and Recreation