



**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS
PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 18, 2023, 6:30 PM
ARDEN HILLS CITY HALL**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Committee Chair Marie Hinton called the April 18, 2023 meeting of the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Committee to order at 6:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Marie Hinton, Committee Members Kristine Poelzer, Tim Nelson, Mark Kelliher, Kerri Seemann, Dan Dietz, Emelia Rogers, Kate Olson, Nancy Jacobson, Jill Anderson

OTHERS PRESENT: Recreation Supervisor Matt Johnson, Council Liaison Emily Rousseau

ABSENT: Committee Member Lacy Loosbrock

A. Oath for Nancy Jacobson

Committee Member Jacobson was administered the oath of office.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Chair Hinton and seconded by Committee Member Olson to add PTRC Goals, Dog Park Improvements, All Abilities Transportation Plan, PTRC Handbook, Outdoor Education and PTRC Survey. Motion passed unanimously.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 21, 2023 PTRC Minutes

Chair Hinton noted that the date listed for the next meeting was incorrect and should be April 18.

A motion was made by Committee Member Kelliher and seconded by Committee Member Nelson to approve the minutes as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

3. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. PTRC Member Updates

Committee Member Poelzer said they had a good amount of volunteers from PTRC at the Egg Hunt, from the Sea Cadets and from Mounds View High School National Honor Society, Councilmembers and friends.

Recreation Supervisor Johnson added they had 150 participants, Shoreview did theirs the same day. He appreciated Committee Member Poelzer finding the extra volunteers.

Committee Member Poelzer said she will share the list of Egg Hunt volunteers at the next meeting.

Committee Member Poelzer said she was asked by Assistant Public Works Director Miller for volunteers to help spread wood chips at Crepeau Park between May 15-June 15, if anyone wants to help.

Committee Member Poelzer said they are waiting to hear from Twin City Hardware regarding an estimate for automatic lock timers for Perry Park restrooms.

Recreation Supervisor Johnson noted the timers won't work at Cummings Park as there is not outside access to the restrooms.

Committee Member Kelliher said they have a working group of himself and Committee Members Poelzer and Seemann that has been exploring solutions to the buckthorn issue throughout the parks. They wanted to explore using goats and found seven vendors. They had conversations with six vendors, five said they were interested in working with them as part of a pilot project of one to two acres. They began identifying external funding sources. Great River Greening has professional grant writers and have naturalists on staff that can eradicate the buckthorn and bring the land back to the original landscape type. He and Committee Member Seemann brought two of their naturalists to see four parks that have buckthorn. The next step would be to ask the Council to approve them to write grant proposals for the Minnesota Legacy Fund. May 26 is the deadline to apply for grants. There is no expense to have Great River Greening engaged but they could potentially receive tens of thousands of dollars that could be used at a number of parks. They fold projects from several cities and apply for all of them as one master grant. They are also able to apply for grants from other organizations. He'd like to see PTRC recommend to the City Council that they authorize an engagement letter so they can participate with Great River Greening in the grant proposals.

A motion was made by Committee Member Kelliher and seconded by Committee Member Poelzer to recommend to the City Council that they authorize an engagement letter to participate with Great River Greening in buckthorn removal grant proposals.

Committee Member Rogers asked if they knew which park they would start in, and are they obligated to replant afterward or is that part of the grant.

Committee Member Kelliher said the money won't be available until the fall of 2024, but there is no obligation to move forward. Great River Greening suggests a phased approach to work on one park at a time. Floral Park, Hazelnut and Chatham are most navigable for goats. Native species would need to be planted after the buckthorn is removed.

Committee Member Jacobson asked if the grant would include all phases; plans, goats or chainsaws, and plantings.

Committee Member Kelliher said the idea would be to bring in a native species that could thrive in the area on their own. All phases would be included in the grant; funds to Great River Greening

to create a blueprint, eradicate the buckthorn, and plantings. The one condition of receiving grant money is to leave the property natural for five years. Estimates include \$105,000 for Floral Park, \$70,000 for Hazelnut Park, \$200,000 for the Chatham trails area, and \$120,000 for Perry Park.

Committee Member Olson asked if anyone had contacted Maplewood to see how things went with Great River Greening.

Committee Member Kelliher responded that no one had. But he had conversations with the forester in New Brighton, and someone in Burnsville.

Committee Member Nelson asked how the City would be involved in the executional aspects of the project? Would they have any say in where the goats were used or what was replanted? Or would Great River Greening make all the decisions based on their expertise?

Committee Member Kelliher said the impression he got from speaking with the Public Works Director and Public Works Superintendent was they'd like Great River Greening to take it all.

Committee Member Anderson wondered when they would need to know the City's response.

City Council Liaison Rousseau said the Council is aware of this item being time sensitive, and if possible, it could be on next Monday's agenda.

Committee Member Kelliher said if they are comfortable with the work that has been done by the subcommittee they could bypass calling a special PTRC meeting and go right to asking Great River Greening to attend the next available City Council work session.

Further discussion ensued regarding the timing of Council approval and potential work sessions.

Committee Member Nelson wondered what need they see for community engagement? His neighborhood is infested with buckthorn and he has offered to pay to have it removed but people don't want to because they like the privacy the buckthorn provides.

Committee Member Kelliher said the naturalists said there will be areas of visibility will be significant once the buckthorn is gone. So, they are emphasizing community education to let people know what it will look like during and after removal.

Committee Member Poelzer noted there was an article online that mentions Maplewood and Great River Greening. They are working with nearly three dozen communities across the state, and have helped restore 22,000 acres at nearly 400 sites since 1995.

Committee Member Seemann clarified that the grant funding is for a five-year timespan, so whatever they apply for now would have to be used from the fall of 2024 through 2029. She stated the director of Great River Greening suggested starting in Floral and Hazelnut Parks as those parks had made the most progress already.

Chair Hinton commented that if they have to leave the area natural for five years there may be some people be unhappy with it in the short term. She asked if the city would have to pay anything toward the work.

Committee Member Kelliher felt that might be up to the grantor.

Committee Member Seemann thought the grant prefers one to one matching.

A vote was taken. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Trail and Parks Projects Update

Recreation Supervisor Johnson stated the only new update was that pavement rating for trails is planned for 2024, which is the first technical step to planning existing trail restorations.

Committee Member Rogers noted that some neighbors of the Safe Routes to School project are a little nervous of potentially getting blocked in and wants to be sure everyone knows about the plans.

Committee Member Poelzer wanted to know if PTRC could still make recommendations for tree planting locations.

Recreation Supervisor Johnson said he would find out.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2023-24 PTRC Goals

Chair Hinton asked if there was anything else they would like to add to the goals. Current goal categories are Trails, Parks, Habitat Restoration, Community Rec & Events, and Volunteer Opportunities.

Committee Member Kelliher felt the goals don't always have actionable language.

Chair Hinton explained this was more to let the Council know their priorities, not so much as to give marching orders to the PTRC. She requested everyone email her with any changes they may have.

B. Dog Agility Exercise Equipment

Committee Member Poelzer said a group from facilities management at Boston Scientific is interested in volunteering to build dog agility exercise equipment for the Perry Park Dog Park and Boston Scientific would donate \$5,000 toward the equipment. The City Council needs to approve acceptance of the donation.

A motion was made by Committee Member Poelzer and seconded by Committee Member Nelson that PTRC recommends the City Council accept a \$5,000 donation and volunteer work from Boston Scientific for the purpose of building dog agility equipment at Perry Park.

Committee Member Olson asked about upkeep and maintenance and if the City would need to provide repairs.

Committee Member Poelzer responded the City would own the equipment and take care of it.

Committee Member Nelson mentioned that they discussed creating separate areas for large and small dogs and felt this would conflict with that goal.

Committee Member Poelzer said the recommendation would be that it go into the large dog area if the space was divided, but right now the park isn't divided.

Discussion ensued regarding separating the dog park into small and large dog areas.

Committee Member Nelson felt the agility equipment was better than having a fence to separate the dogs.

Committee Member Jacobson asked what the overall plan was for Perry Dog Park, she uses it but felt it wasn't a very nice park to go to, it's often muddy, no water. She thought this equipment would be great but there are other things that would make it a better park.

Recreation Supervisor Johnson said the park is being updated with a shade structure, trees and a few other things.

Committee Member Anderson stated that as a small dog owner that was afraid of other dogs there is no way she would bring her dog to the park while other big dogs are there. The equipment is a great idea but would like to have more input from the community on separating it. She would feel more comfortable if there was a section for small dogs.

Committee Member Poelzer recommended separation because she sees a lot of small dogs in the area but not in the park.

Committee Member Nelson felt they should have an overall plan with input from residents rather than adhoc decisions about equipment and fencing.

Committee Member Nelson asked to add a friendly amendment to the motion, to engage the community in the overall vision of what the dog park should look like.

Committee Member Kelliher said he was hearing the item be tabled until such time as they could do a survey.

Committee Member Nelson said not entirely, he wouldn't want to pass on this opportunity.

Committee Member Poelzer noted the trees are in, the shelter has been ordered and going in, and the entrance will have cement.

Chair Hinton amended the motion to say the City should accept the donation and the equipment be installed on the side of the park that might become the large dog area if it were split, and they look at community input on whether they'd like the park split into large and small dog areas. Committee Member Rogers seconded the amendment. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Ramsey County All-Abilities 2050 Transportation Plan

Recreation Supervisor Johnson explained that Ramsey County is working on an All-Abilities Transportation Plan. PTRC members are encouraged to share input via the website link in the memo.

D. PTRC Handbook

Tabled until next month.

E. Outdoor Education

Committee Member Seemann said she was interested in holding somewhat informal classes on invasive species, pollinators and other things like that in the parks.

Recreation Supervisor Johnson felt these ideas were all great and they would be easy to implement working together. She could come to the playground programs and teach things to the kids that are already in the program, they could also have times where it would be open for anyone to come.

A motion was made by Committee Member Poelzer and seconded by Committee Member Dietz that Committee Member Seemann should work with Recreation Supervisor Johnson to organize outdoor educational classes. Motion passed unanimously.

F. PTRC Survey

Tabled until next month.

5. REPORTS

G. Council Liaison Update

Council Liaison Rousseau stated that she would like to add a one-year youth committee position by targeting the high school and possibly Bethel University. They would probably serve from September to May to give them an opportunity to get involved with local government. She wondered if PTRC would be interested in piloting that.

A motion was made by Committee Member Poelzer and seconded by Committee Member Seemann to pilot a youth committee member position on the PTRC.

Committee Member Kelliher asked if this was to give them experience to watch government in motion or would there actually be tasks or projects they'd want this person to be involved in.

Council Liaison Rousseau said her preference would be to have them be the 13th seat, they could get involved as much as they wanted to involve with things like the Egg Hunt.

Committee Member Nelson felt it was a good idea as they make a lot of decisions with youth in mind, so it would be good to get input from them.

Chair Hinton noted this was something they talked about last year and everyone was in favor.

Committee Member Jacobson asked if there would be a designated mentor, or would they just come to the meeting and engage in whatever is going on.

Council Liaison Rousseau thought it would be helpful to have an informal mentor, someone to take them under their wing and have a connection.

Committee Member Kelliher wondered who would be responsible for recruiting the individual.

Council Liaison Rousseau said there is a Youth in Government organization at the high school they could reach out to, and they could talk to someone at Bethel. She didn't know if the right person would be the Communications Coordinator or someone else on staff.

Recreation Supervisor Johnson said it would depend on how much the committee wanted to be involved in picking the person, or helping to promote it.

Committee Member Kelliher stated that he liked the idea but he felt the committee shouldn't be involved in deciding who gets the position. He felt it should be established by someone on Council or staff.

A vote was taken. The motion carried unanimously.

6. NEXT MEETING

H. Tuesday, May 16, 2023

The next PTRC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 16, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.