



**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS
PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2021, 6:30 PM
ARDEN HILLS CITY HALL**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair John Van Valkenburg called the September 21, 2021 meeting of the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Committee to order at 6:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair John Van Valkenburg, Committee Members Paul Beggin, Terry Finlay, and Kristine Poelzer.

PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Committee Members Jill Anderson, Dan Dietz, Micah Kiernan, Marie Hinton, Suzanne McGaugh, Tim Nelson, Rich Straumann and Council Liaison David Grant.

OTHERS PRESENT: Staff Liaison Joe Vaughan, and Interim Public Works Director David Swearingen

ABSENT: Committee Member Harold Peterson

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was unanimously approved by the Committee.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 16, 2021 PTRC Minutes

B. April 20, 2021 PTRC Minutes

The minutes were approved unanimously by the Committee.

3. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Trail Projects Update

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen reported that the consultant for the Snelling Avenue North trail from Highway 51 to County Road E presented three options to the City Council. The first option would be to replace the road as it is today, second option would have a curb on one side with a trail on that side and a bike path on the roadway, the third option has curbs on both sides of

the road with one side having a 10-foot wide multi-use trail. There will be an open house meeting at City Hall regarding the options, hopefully in mid-October.

Council Liaison Grant added the cost estimates were originally considerably higher but if the road stays within the existing footprint the cost is minimized and cost to add a trail is fairly reasonable. It is still to be determined which option to go with and which side of the road the trail should go on. He acknowledged Interim Public Works Director Swearingen and Bolten & Menk for looking at all options.

Committee Member Poelzer suggested they make the cost very visible when the options are shown.

Committee Member Finlay said they also need to make it clear the options can't be intermingled.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen noted the designs have been approved by MSA and therefore wouldn't have any changes.

Committee Member Beggin said he'd like to see the meeting be hybrid and accessible via Zoom.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said construction is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2022. The City will not be able to lower the speed limit without a MnDOT study and approval from MSA, but the design can help slow vehicles.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen reported the Mounds View High School trail segment from the school to Old Highway 10, and south on Old Highway 10 to County Road E2 is in design phase with the intent of being ready for construction when funding becomes available.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen explained the Lake Johanna Boulevard Trail Study is being done by Ramsey County. The trail location would be along Lake Johanna Boulevard from County Road D to the intersection of County Road E and Old Snelling. There will be a public informational meeting at Tony Schmidt Regional Park on October 5 at 5 pm.

Committee Member Poelzer wondered if there could be signs posted along the Elmer Anderson trail as many of the trail users aren't from Arden Hills.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said that will be done by the consultants doing the study.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen stated the Parkshore Drive exercise trail will be constructed as part of the senior living development. The project has broken ground but there is currently no completion date set.

Committee Member Poelzer will send photos to the Committee of equipment at a similar trail in Brooklyn Center.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said the next trail is a part of the Lexington Avenue reconstruction project that Ramsey County is doing next year. There is a connection missing from

Red Fox Road to Gray Fox Road that will be finished on the Arden Hills (west) side of Lexington so you will be able to walk from Red Fox Road to County Road E.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said this summer Public Works completed crack sealing and fog sealing on the Elmer Anderson trail. As part of the 2021 PMP they rehabilitated trail connections from each of those streets and added ADH compliant pedestrian ramps. Hazelnut Park now has a new connection to Prior Avenue that is ADH compliant. Also, the crosswalks on Hamline Avenue are completed with an ADH compliant pedestrian ramp and receiving pad near Wyncrest, and ADH ramps and rapid flashing beacons at the trail crossing.

B. Trail List Update

Chair Van Valkenburg stated he attended a City Council Work Session on July 26 and the discussed the trail priorities list submitted by the PTRC. It was decided they would try to have better communication between the Council and PTRC and meet at least annually.

Mayor Grant felt it would be important in 2022 for PTRC to have a clear work plan. The committee seems to focus on trails and could have a broader view on parks and recreation.

C. National Fitness Campaign Fitness Court

Chair Van Valkenburg stated that staff had sent a brochure about fitness courts that could be used by people of all abilities and ages. Is there an interest in the community for a court and which parks would it fit?

Staff Liaison Vaughan added this would be free to the public equipment. There are only a few other courts like this in Minnesota and none in the metro area. The court is 38'X38' which is roughly half of a tennis court. Adding a fitness court to one of the parks would help turn it into a destination park. He'd like location ideas and if they think it would be a viable project. He spoke with a representative from the National Fitness Campaign who sent a list of locations they suggested. The equipment is body weight, free motion pieces. Grant funding would be \$30,000, local funding match around \$110,000. There would be other options to explore through the DNR.

Committee Member Poelzer said she would be willing to work with staff on this, and there is a video available to show what the courts look like. She thought it was a great idea and liked Cummings Park for a location.

Chair Van Valkenburg asked if anyone else would like to help staff explore this further.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said the idea of the item is to gauge interest of the committee. If there is interest they can try to work it into the City's capital plan.

Committee Member Hinton thought it was a wonderful idea, including making one of the parks more of a destination.

Chair Van Valkenburg asked for more information on partnerships and locations, and another staff report next month.

Council Liaison Grant noted that the last time the City put in new playground equipment it was a similar scenario where the vendor gave a grant/discount as an enticement.

Committee Member Beggin noted that doing a survey about a court when we don't have one like it in the community, it's hard to know if people are interested. In some ways it would be asking businesses if they are interested in partnering to help make a destination park. He thinks it's worth exploring but thought putting that much money into one location is outrageous when there are so many needs of replacing equipment that is already in parks.

Committee Member Poelzer added that she would like to see it be little to no cost for the City. She knows Boston Scientific and Land O'Lakes employees go to Cummings Park and would use it, and people nearby that walk to work through the park. She's hoping the employers would be willing to donate funds.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Summer and Fall Recreation Update

Staff Liaison Vaughan reported that this summer saw a return of recreation programs. We offered youth soccer, t-ball and baseball leagues, summer camps, the playground programs, tennis lessons, and adult programs. We offered two events this summer, Bark & Rec Day and the Penny Carnival, both were well attended. Program participant numbers vary from 2019 because programming in 2019 isn't the same as what was offered in 2021 due to staffing changes in the department and programs cut because of COVID. Youth soccer and flag football are currently underway. AARP has cancelled all in-person activities until January 1, 2022, but they will have online classes. There is a discount code on our website.

Committee Member Poelzer asked if the information about AARP could be put in the City newsletter.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said it is on the top of the webstore page with a link to AARP and the discount code, he can check into adding something more to the webstore.

Council Liaison Grant said he it would have to go through the newsletter committee and it may be a timing issue.

Chair Van Valkenburg asked if staff could provide a list of dates when recreation guides are sent out and when the committee should be thinking about programming.

Staff Liaison Vaughan responded that he will be working on the winter guide in early October, completed and sent to the printer in late October/early November.

Committee Member Beggin wondered if the next meeting would be too late to discuss winter programming.

Staff Liaison Vaughan replied that it depends on the type of programming. If it were a program to partner with another city it could be too late, but if it would be an independent program they may be able to manage it. They haven't had discussions yet about ice rinks and warming houses, but he

was thinking if the warming houses were open there would be a mask requirement, possibly a capacity limit in the warming house and picnic tables available outside. Attendance last year was good and having picnic tables was helpful.

Committee Member Poelzer asked if they did any participant recruiting through the school system.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said the Rec Guide gets mailed to all residents in Arden Hills. They used to deliver them to the elementary schools, but they are no longer allowed to do that as the schools want to focus on their own programs. Arden Hills is still allowed to hold some programs in the schools but it is less than it used to be. The change was implemented by the school district in 2019.

Chair Van Valkenburg asked what was the process for approving programs.

Staff Liaison Vaughan replied that he decides what programs they want to offer; events from previous years and successful programs. The only time he's taken the program guide to the City Council was during COVID to get their approval on what programs they felt would be safe to allow.

Chair Van Valkenburg asked if coaches and participants completed surveys.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said he provides surveys to staff to hand out to parents. He can compile data and share with the Committee. He also surveys the seasonal staff.

Committee Member Beggin wondered if there were rental fees being charged for users.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said the North Suburban Soccer Association rents the larger field at Hazelnut Park, Minnesota Fast Pitch Academy Foundation rents fields at Perry Park, the Shoreview Area Youth Baseball League rents a field at Perry Park and a field at Floral Park. All are charged a fee of \$33 for 2 hours.

Council Liaison Grant added rental fee generally offsets field maintenance and some equipment, but capital improvements are appropriated by the City Council.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said they've had positive feedback so far from fall programs, and from the youth associations. The softball association want to have a tournament at Perry Park next year.

B. Remainder of 2021 and 2022 Meeting Dates for the Parks, Trails and Recreation Committee

Chair Van Valkenburg reviewed the upcoming meeting dates. He said he would like to have a theme for the October 19 meeting, focusing on personnel needs for the parks. He'd like to discuss the Capital Investment Plan (CIP) in November.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said the 2022 CIP includes Floral Park court resurfacing, possible basketball hoop replacement, pickleball lines etc.

Discussion continued regarding pickleball courts and nets.

Chair Van Valkenburg wondered if they could leave pickleball equipment and other equipment for people to use.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said the boxes hold bases and pitching machines and there isn't much room to add other items. They could purchase another box to put by the tennis courts. He hasn't had requests to rent equipment other than for volleyball. People bring their own ball for the gagaball pit.

Chair Van Valkenburg felt they should add a meeting on December 14 to focus on programs. He asked the committee members to be thinking about how park programs work and maintenance issues.

C. 2022 Parks, Trails and Recreation Committee Work Plan

Chair Van Valkenburg wanted to add personnel and staffing needs to the list. He asked about addressing the personnel/staffing needs as they relate to the Committee, parks and maintenance. Staffing decisions are made solely by the City Council, not the PTRC.

Chair Van Valkenburg said that after touring parks last July, he compiled a list of maintenance issues and other items at Hazelnut, Valentine, Perry, Arden Manor, Freeway, Samson and Crepeau parks. He would like to add the east side parks including Johanna Marsh, Ingerson, Floral, Cummings, Royal Hills and Arden Manor.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen commented that it was a struggle to get seasonal employees this year. That does affect park maintenance. Streets, water, sewer, storm water departments involve rain gardens, storm sewer rehab, potholes etc. and staff has been spread thin. He appreciates the list of from the committee and staff can work on items as time allows.

Committee Member Poelzer thought if they went to the schools or colleges they may be able to find students that want to earn funds for their sports programs.

Council Liaison Grant said if they have issues with how parks are maintained they should notify the Public Works Director who can in turn discuss staffing with the City Council. He felt they should make recommendations on what they feel needs to be maintained and they should expect them to be maintained, then the Public Works Director would come up with a plan. He reiterated that this year was difficult to find seasonal employees.

Committee Member Finlay said he hoped there would be a way to work more closely with the maintenance department.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen stated the lists they were compiling were helpful and he appreciated them. The best way they could help would be to get the younger people involved as seasonal employees.

Committee Member Beggin thought it had been a real challenge for Staff Liaison Vaughan as programmer with less staff. He came up with ideas that were low cost or no cost that could bring people into the parks. He suggested music in the parks, food trucks, ice cream socials, a walk from Valentine Hills to Perry Park or on other trail sections to encourage people to socialize.

Committee Member Poelzer said the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department has community service volunteers that could help direct traffic for walks. She felt all of the ideas were great. She has been counting people walking the path by her house and has been amazed at the amount of activity.

Committee Member Hinton suggested outdoor yoga as another option to bring people to the parks.

Council Liaison Grant felt Cummings Park would be good for music in the parks; the band could be on the soccer field and people could sit on the slope looking toward the band, and the shelter could be used to dish up ice cream.

Council Liaison Grant thought the concept of a destination park could be an item added to the Committee Work Plan.

Chair Van Valkenburg noted that there is an opportunity to make suggestions about where trees could be planted in the parks because there will be some available.

Council Liaison Grant stated when developers remove trees they can replant or provide payment in lieu of trees. There are a number of developments that have provided money with approximately \$70,000 available. He said once they compile a list of locations it could be given to the Public Works Director who could bring it to the City Council. Tree locations don't have to be in a park.

Chair Van Valkenburg mentioned that there have been a number of new benches installed from donations from the Arden Hills Foundation.

Council Liaison Grant said the Arden Hills Foundation will be purchasing trash can covers for Cummings and Perry Parks. They are also looking into funding two commercial grade charcoal grills, concrete pads for the grills and charcoal receptacles to be put near the pavilions at those same parks.

D. Parks, Trails and Recreation Committee Chair Reports

No report.

5. REPORTS

Council Liaison Grant reported that the outside of the hockey rink was painted by the Arden Hills-Shoreview Rotary, the inside will be painted by staff once the road construction materials are removed. Some buckthorn removal has continued, most recently in the Chatham trails area. There are a couple of groups working alongside the County workers to help remove buckthorn.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said Public Works purchased a new brush cutting type mower to maintain areas where buckthorn has already been cut. Residents can also schedule to have buckthorn cuttings picked up by the City.

6. NEXT MEETING

The next PTRC Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 19, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.