



**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS
PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2021, 6:30 PM
ARDEN HILLS CITY HALL**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair John Van Valkenburg called the October 19, 2021 meeting of the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Committee to order at 6:35 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair John Van Valkenburg, Committee Members Paul Beggin, Terry Finlay, Kristine Poelzer and Council Liaison David Grant

PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Committee Members Dan Dietz, Jill Anderson, Rich Straumann

OTHERS PRESENT: Staff Liaison Joe Vaughan, and Public Works Director/City Engineer David Swearingen

ABSENT: Committee Members Harold Peterson, Micah Kiernan, Marie Hinton, Suzanne McGaugh, and Tim Nelson

Council Liaison Grant stated there were three items he wanted to address. Regarding personnel, he reminded the Committee that there is a Personnel Committee that makes staffing decisions. The destination park could be added to the work plan but that doesn't necessarily mean there is funding. Also, there were comments made that implied a decision had been made on the Old Snelling Trail, but clarified there have been no decisions made.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was unanimously approved by the Committee.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 21, 2021 PTRC Minutes

Chair Van Valkenburg clarified that on page 6 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. He asked the minutes reflect those comments.

The minutes were approved as amended by the Committee.

3. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Trail Projects Update

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen reported that the Lake Johanna Boulevard Trail Study open house, led by Ramsey County, had a great turn out.

Committee Member Poelzer said she attended the event. They had many people sign up for email updates. She felt it was well attended, run well and the poster boards were good. They also had an online presentation. She said there were signs posted along the trail advertising the event.

Committee Member Beggin felt the open house was very well presented. Geology, water flow, which side of the road a trail could be on were discussed, and it was noted it was a joint project with the City.

Committee Member Poelzer said it was interesting that the design study extended from the north end of Elmer Anderson Trail, across County Road E and down to the lake, but also up to Cleveland along County Road E.

Committee Member Anderson said she also attended the open house and agreed with the other comments. She said she was having a discussion with one of the City Councilmembers regarding the Old Snelling Trail that she felt was inconsistent with what she had previously seen, and so she discussed it with Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen and the issue was resolved.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said the Snelling Avenue N improvements open house will be October 20 in the City Council Chambers. Consultants from Bolten & Menk will be there with layouts of the proposed designs and cost estimates. There is also a virtual presentation on the City website and a link for comments. There will be three options presented, two include a grade separated trail, one has the roadway as it is today.

Committee Member Poelzer asked if letters of support from the community would be helpful when submitting for grants for the Mounds View School trail.

Council Liaison Grant said in the past they have had letters of support from the Superintendent of Mounds View Schools and Bethel University would probably submit a letter.

Committee Member Poelzer felt that because it was a connection to a trail in New Brighton there would be more support for it because it's not just a stand-alone trail.

Committee Member Beggin suggested they also contact St. John the Baptist church and school.

Committee Member Beggin asked where the Parkshore development trail was at, and if it was anticipated if it would be paved when the building was complete.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen responded that the trail is roughly graded, but won't be constructed until next spring or summer.

B. Destination Park Memo

Staff Liaison Vaughan noted that there was discussion about a fitness court that turned into more of a destination park discussion. A destination park would have amenities that would draw people from inside and outside the community. For example, Roseville built an all-inclusive playground.

Council Liaison Grant said had visited the Roseville location and described the features.

Committee Member Finlay said his worry is that the Arden Hills parks can't accommodate a lot of parking. He noted that Rice Creek Commons will have a park with cross country skiing and kayaking, and there would be parking there, although that would be Ramsey County.

Chair Van Valkenburg asked if this was something they would want to do in one of the Arden Hills parks and if so, what would be of interest to the community? The first suggestion was fitness courts.

Committee Member Poelzer said she had sent a link to the video of a fitness court in St. Cloud/Waite Park. She's been trying to speak with someone to ask how it was working out and how they paid for it.

Committee Member Finlay felt if they could figure out a park that could accommodate something then they could survey that area of the community.

Chair Van Valkenburg said it would have to be Cummings, Perry or possibly Hazelnut Park. Did they want to do a survey and how would you phrase it?

Committee Member Beggin stated they should do a survey that said we would be doing one of the things in the survey.

Committee Member Dietz agreed they should do a survey, he'd be interested to see what people that live by the park would think. His concern is size and where people would park.

Chair Van Valkenburg asked if he was hearing there wasn't interest in getting more information on a destination park, or should they try to work out a survey?

Committee Member Finlay said if they could figure out a park there would be but right now, he couldn't support it.

Committee Member Beggin commented that approximately three years ago they talked about having a skate park inside one of the hockey rinks, they had also talked about doing an indoor sport court. He felt they should be open minded but realistically look at ongoing expenses to maintain a facility.

Chair Van Valkenburg added that as they upgrade playground areas they could add features.

Committee Member Poelzer said Perry Park could be a possible location.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said the adult softball program was cut so usage of the fields at Perry Park is limited to one youth association that primarily uses two fields. They could keep two fields but use one for a destination park. Perry Park would be his location choice.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen noted they would watch the usage trends from the previous year, this year and next.

Committee Member Poelzer discussed the idea of having food available at a park.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said they could measure the space available if they were to convert a field.

Chair Van Valkenburg summarized that they would keep it in mind as they are working on parks, but not necessarily move forward with a survey.

C. 2022 Parks, Trails and Recreation Committee Work Plan

Chair Van Valkenburg said they were to go around to the parks and write down things they liked or that could be improved. He consolidated the list and sent it to everyone. It is a priority for the Committee to make note of issues at the parks.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen commented that they have been short on staff but they have been trying to mow each park every week. There are no restrooms open to the public unless one of the facilities is being rented.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said the port-a-potties are rented from On Site and they do all the maintenance and cleaning of those.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said they can check on the On Site maintenance schedule. He also noted there is a plan for staff to grind stumps yet this fall.

Chair Van Valkenburg said other ideas include spraying or cleaning benches annually, and holding a spring cleanup in the parks. He wondered if they could coordinate with the Public Works Department, and have residents come to help.

Committee Member Finlay suggested a list be posted of things that need to be done so community members can volunteer.

Committee Member Poelzer thought donuts or pizza could be donated to volunteers. And they could post for volunteers on the Arden Hillbillie's Facebook page.

Chair Van Valkenburg thought they could try that in the spring.

Chair Van Valkenburg stated that some of the parks playground equipment still has the old wooden borders and woodchips that are rotting and weedy. He felt they needed to be replaced.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen responded that they do freshen up the woodchips, but he knows Floral Park needs attention.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said we have 97 benches in the city and adding more. They are looking at replacing benches rather than add more, but they are making it a priority to inspect and clean benches annually.

Council Liaison Grant thought it was a good thing for the Committee to bring these things to the attention of staff. There are garbage can covers at Cummings Park and the Arden Hills Foundation will be donating for an additional 18. Every park with a shelter will get their garbage cans covered. Staff has been working on grills, concrete pads and charcoal receptacles pricing.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen stated the concrete would cost approximately \$1100 for the two pads and the dog park. He added that the charcoal grill Cummings will stay and the ash bins would be ordered along with the other grills.

Committee Member Beggin mentioned that the woodchips under the swings are gone quickly at Valentine Park. Someone had left a small rake there, and he had used it to rake the area. The next day some kids were playing and when they were done they used the rake to push the woodchips back. A few weeks later the rake was gone.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said they would like to and should put rubber mats under swings and slides. The company installing playground equipment would also install the mats.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Personnel and Staffing Needs

Chair Van Valkenburg stated that he was the one that wanted to discuss this item to see if they had enough staffing. Clearly they don't have authority and there is a Personnel Committee but he wondered if anyone had any comments on personnel and staffing as it relates to the parks.

Council Liaison Grant said they were expecting up to eight seasonal employees and only had 2.5. On a citywide basis, office staff is hard to find also.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said in the three years he has been here Public Works hasn't been fully staffed in the summer.

Committee Member Poelzer said she would be happy to go the local high schools to talk to athletic directors for them to speak to students about working seasonally as a way to raise funds for their sport.

B. Parks, Trails and Recreation Committee Chair Reports

Chair Van Valkenburg noted that pickleball is a growing sport and Cummings and Royal Hills have pickleball courts marked. Floral Park will be redone next year. He thought they should consider adding pickleball to their programming. You could have two pickleball games per tennis court if the nets are placed correctly and he felt they should consider that for Cummings Park so they could have up to 16 people playing at once.

Staff Liaison Vaughan confirmed that Cummings and Royal Hills have yellow lines painted on the tennis courts. There could be two games going at one time per court.

Chair Van Valkenburg said the City has two nets now, if they got two more they could have four games going at once at Cummings Park. He thought the nets could be stored at Cummings and brought out on a designated night. At Hazelnut they lower the tennis net slightly to work for pickleball.

Discussion ensued regarding how pickleball courts are marked on a tennis court.

Chair Van Valkenburg said he would like to see music in the park and food trucks.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said they did have yoga in Cummings Park last summer, but it was a smaller group than what comes to City Hall.

Committee Member Poelzer said many years ago there was an event in a park where there was food and things to do under a tent, including a magician. She suggested possibly trying something like that, that would be free to residents.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said planning for the Spring/Summer Recreation Guide takes place in late January and February. They like to have it out in early March.

Council Liaison Grant said the items the committee wants to look at should get put together to present to staff for possible inclusion in the recreation guide, and that could get put into their work plan. For example, the work plan could consist of reviewing the parks in summer, late summer/fall they could research and review what programs the city has and what could get put together for staff for consideration. Funding, location, parking may be issues.

Chair Van Valkenburg suggested they review the possibilities in November.

Chair Van Valkenburg noted that two new benches were placed at Crepeau Park, some were fixed and reset, and buckthorn removed so the park is looking good. Bethel also fixed up some of their trails.

5. REPORTS

Council Liaison Grant reported that New Perspectives Senior Living broke ground. They will be building a trail that will extend as part of the system to Crepeau Park. They will be moving forward with funding requests for the high school trail and getting letters of recommendation. A request was granted for \$500,000 for water main under Lexington Avenue when it gets reconstructed which could leave money left over in the Capital Fund. The City also received approximately \$575,000 this year and next year that can be spent on a number of things, it will probably be spent on infrastructure like sewer lining.

Chair Van Valkenburg said Committee Member Dietz's employer contributed another \$1,000 to the Arden Hills Foundation, and he's been using some of that money at Floral Park.

Committee Member Dietz said he's looking into adding a water source at Floral Park and electricity so they don't have to use a manual pump. He was waiting to see how much money was available before he pursued those any further, there is either \$3,000 or \$4,000.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen stated that work would need to be coordinated with himself and the Public Works Superintendent. A site visit would be helpful.

Staff Liaison Vaughan said they had a flash light pumpkin hunt at Cummings Park instead of the Halloween event at City Hall. Participation was very good, over 50 kids registered. They each received a flashlight and were able to carve the pumpkins, and play some games. There was a lot of positive feedback.

Council Liaison Grant mentioned that David Swearingen was promoted to Public Works Director/City Engineer from Interim Public Works Director.

6. NEXT MEETING

The next PTRC Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 16, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.