

APPROVED MINUTES

PARKS, RECREATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2019

7:00 P.M. CITY CENTER

Heritage Rooms

PRNR COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Larry Link, Chair; Patrice Erickson, Vice Chair;
Cecilia Cervantes, Kim Harris, Andy McGlasson,
Leonard Pesheck, John Rahman, Ken Ross,
Kirk Spresser

PRNR STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Shay Ginuga, Riley Marble, Tanay Salunke,
Zachery Spears, Simon Vergara

CITY STAFF:

Jay Lotthammer, Parks and Recreation Director
Lori Brink, Recreation Manager
Matt Bourne, Parks and Natural Resources Manager
Valerie Verley, Community Center Manager
Lauren Stufft, Forestry Technician

RECORDING SECRETARY:

Jodie Fenske

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Link called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Roll call was taken. Commission Members Cervantes and Spresser, and Community Center Manager Verley, were absent. Student Representatives Marble, Salunke, Spears, and Vergara were absent. Commission Member Harris arrived at 7:10 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Erickson moved, seconded by Pesheck, to approve the agenda as presented.
Motion carried 7-0.

III. APPROVAL OF PRNR MINUTES

Motion: Ross moved, seconded by Erickson, to approve the September 9, 2019 minutes as presented. **Motion carried 7-0.**

IV. REPORT OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION

Lotthammer reported on actions recently taken by the City Council.

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A. DONATION TO ARTS IN THE PARK FROM ENVY SKIN CLINIC

Council accepted a donation of \$500 from Envy Skin Clinic to go towards the annual Arts in the Parks event.

B. FITNESS EQUIPMENT FOR COMMUNITY CENTER

Council approved the purchase of \$168,000 of new equipment for the Community Center. Lotthammer stated \$90,000 will come from the 2019 budget and \$78,000 from the 2020 budget right after the first of the year. By combining the purchases, the City was able to obtain better quantity pricing. The Community Center will take possession of half of the equipment very soon. Erickson inquired and Lotthammer responded the equipment is mostly replacement, including elliptical machines, zero runners, octane trainers, and a full set of twenty-four new spinning bikes. Ross inquired and Lotthammer responded there is not much value in the used equipment after the heavy use and miles endured, although credit is received from the vendor.

C. LEASE AGREEMENTS WITH METROPOLITAN AIRPORTS COMMISSION (MAC)

Council approved amendments to renew the lease agreements with the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) for the Flying Cloud ball fields, including all soccer fields, two baseball fields, the Miracle Field, and two lacrosse fields.

D. PLEASANT HILL CEMETERY COLUMBARIUM PROJECT

Council awarded the contract to Odessa II LLC for the Pleasant Hill Cemetery columbarium project. Lotthammer stated work is currently being done on the project and the columbarium structure will be purchased in 2020 for delivery in spring.

E. RETAINING WALL CONSTRUCTION ALONG EDEN PRAIRIE ROAD

Council awarded the contract to Odessa II LLC for the Eden Prairie Road retaining wall rehabilitation project located across County Road 4 from the baseball stadium.

F. DONATIONS FROM DENTISTS OF EDEN PRAIRIE

Council adopted a Resolution accepting a donation of \$500 to be used towards Fall Into Fitness (\$250) and Floating Pumpkin Patch (\$250) from Dentists of Eden Prairie.

G. STARING LAKE BUILDING SECURITY

Council approved a standard agreement for contracted services with VTI Security

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for installation of the security monitoring equipment and door access control system at the new Staring Lake Park building. This security monitoring system will allow staff onsite to view activity in all areas of the building, as well as both the sledding hill and ice rink, simultaneously from the main office. The door access control system will allow staff to open and close the building as needed and eliminate the need for keys to access the building. It will also allow staff to isolate different areas of the building to allow access to certain areas while restricting access to others during times the building is not staffed.

Pesheck inquired and Lotthammer responded the building will be completed soon and the final walk-through inspection is scheduled this week. The entire parking lot will be redone at the end of October and the November Commission meeting will be held in the new building.

V. REPORT OF PLANNING COMMISSION

VI. PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATION

A. HANDOUTS OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Brink noted the Fall Harvest was held last weekend and despite the rainy weather, approximately 350 people attended. Ross commended Staff on the event and stated he noticed the wagon rides were full every time. Brink noted the Arts in the Park event was also held on a rainy day. Staff is currently evaluating different timing for this event since both spring and fall scheduling has resulted in poor weather.

Brink presented handouts of the following events.

1. **Floating Pumpkin Patch.** This event will take place on Friday, October 11, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Preregistration is required and the event is already sold out.
2. **Fall into Fitness.** The Community Center will host this free open house on Saturday, October 12, from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Participants will be able to sample classes of new group fitness offerings, tour the facility, and meet instructors. The event is also used as a membership recruitment tool as the new-member enrollment fee is waived all day.
3. **Fall Lunch.** This annual social event will be held at the Senior Center on Wednesday, October 23, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. A portion of the event is sponsored by Seniors Helping Seniors and the The Glenn Minnetonka Senior Living.
4. **Spooky Saturday.** The Community Center will host trick-or-treating, arts and crafts, music, games, and climbing in the Prairie Play Zone on Saturday, October 26, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Many businesses and organizations in the community participate in sponsoring this annual event which is attended by hundreds of children.

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5. **Not-So-Scary Nature Trail.** This event will take place on Saturday, October 26, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Outdoor Center. During this educational event, participants can walk the lantern-lit trail and learn about animals while collecting Halloween treats. Staggered timeslots are offered so younger children can attend early and the more adventurous in the dark.
6. **Halloween on the Mall.** This annual event will take place on Thursday, October 31, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Eden Prairie Center. Participants are welcome to attend in costume to trick or treat at participating mall merchants, enjoy live entertainment in Center Court, and meet Eden Prairie police officers and firefighters. Brink stated four to five thousand people attend each year. Chair Link shared concern this event may detract from neighborhood trick or treating participation. Student Representative Shay Ginuga shared fond memories of attending the mall event as a child.
7. **Eden Prairie Indoor Triathlon.** Participants ages fourteen and older are invited to participate in this event being held on Sunday, November 3 at the Community Center. Registration is available online or in person.
8. **Veterans Breakfast.** The Senior Center will host this event on Friday, November 8, from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. All are welcome to celebrate and honor veterans who have served our country, enjoy breakfast, and hear a special guest speak on a veteran-related topic. A portion of this event is sponsored by Brookdale Senior Living and Home Instead Senior Care.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

IX. REPORTS OF COMMISSION & STAFF

A. PARKS AND RECREATION EXPERIENCES

Staff and Commission members shared recent parks and recreation related experiences.

Harris attended the Floating Pumpkin Patch in the past with her children and looks forward to attending again this year. Pesheck has enjoyed watching the steady progress of the Staring Lake Building project. He inquired if it has affected pickle ball and/or tennis participation. Bourne responded it has not in that plenty of parking has been open throughout the project. Chair Link stated he enjoyed noticing the Staring Lake ballfields being used by cricket players recently.

McGlasson noticed signs of disruption due to the light rail project not only in Eden Prairie but also in other areas of the metro. He inquired and Lotthammer stated the project is not expected to be completed until 2023 or 2024. Massive construction will be occurring in the next two years. Trees along Purgatory Creek Park will be

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removed soon and bridge piers will likely be installed yet this year.

B. RECREATION SERVICES MANAGER

1. Summer Recap.

Brink provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining the camp, program, and league highlights of summer 2019.

Special events held this spring included the annual Animal Open House at the Outdoor Center, a youth-only open house at the Art Center, and the Park Clean-up Day. The adult and youth open houses at the Art Center were separated this year. The youth-only event resulted in the largest ever turnout seen at the Art Center. The Arbor Day Walk and Green Fair was held in conjunction with the Minnesota State Tree-Climbing Competition. The Arts in the Park event was postponed due to weather and was held in September.

Summer special events included the Festival of Jazz/Ribfest, Starring at Staring evening concert series, Eden Prairie Players summer musical “State Fair,” KidStock daytime concert series, 4th of July Hometown Celebration, PeopleFest!, and Movies in the Park. Attendance at Starring at Staring seemed to increase with the change to Thursday night versus Wednesday night in previous years. PeopleFest! was expanded to eleven days of events with over seven hundred attendees.

Brink displayed statistics of summer program highlights including a slight increase in overall enrollments and refined and expanded teen offerings. Additional outreach events and more full-day offerings were made available. Positive customer and staff feedback was received as in the past.

Enrollment in day camps has increased 20 percent from 2015, while enrollment in playground camps has remained consistent. Playground camps at the Community Center and Lake Riley, as well as Preschool camps at the Outdoor Center, experienced large wait lists. Enrollments at the Art Center have doubled in recent years. Sports and enrichment classes have experienced increased offerings and enrollment, with programs for the youngest kids experiencing the most growth.

Link inquired and Brink responded the struggle to find qualified staff remains constant. The City advertises the leadership development benefit versus other employers who are able to pay a higher wage.

Youth camp attendance at the Art Center has increased steadily over the years and reached almost five hundred this summer. New full-day options with a supervised lunch period were popular.

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In addition to setting up pop-up splash pads at Edenvale Park and Nesbitt Preserve Park, Crestwood Park was added this year. The splash pads are planned in areas where lots of kids reside, but not necessarily the kids who are able to enroll in the City's programming.

Adult Athletics saw increases as well. A new yard games league resulted in twenty-four participants and plans include offering two additional leagues next year. Sand volleyball leagues increased from sixty-five to seventy-one teams. Softball league participation has decreased over the last few years; this decline has been experienced statewide. The City is retaining leagues longer by offering double headers.

Pickleball continues to grow, increasing from 103 to 124 league registrations this year. A zip code analysis indicated over 50 percent of the participants are Eden Prairie residents.

Tennis program enrollment is down slightly but group swim lesson and private swim lesson enrollments have increased slightly.

Link commended Brink and Staff on adapting programs to meet the needs of residents. Brink stated increased numbers are not the only measure of success. The City wishes to break down barriers and reach kids who don't usually attend programming. Plans include setting up programming at certain housing complexes so more kids can participate.

C. COMMUNITY CENTER MANAGER

D. PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGER

1. Emerald Ash Borer, Oak Wilt, and Dutch Elm Disease Update.

Bourne introduced Forestry Technician Lauren Stufft. He stated she has been working for the City just over six months and has taken forestry initiatives to the next level and has been instrumental in Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), Oak Wilt, and Dutch Elm disease programs. She described Oak Wilt as a fungus, similar to Dutch Elm Disease, deadly to Red Oak trees. Stufft provided the Commission with a forestry update on shade tree pest control.

Stufft presented statistics indicating an increase in total number of trees with Oak Wilt from 10 in 2018 to 105 in 2019 and a decrease in total number of trees with Dutch Elm Disease from 212 in 2018 to 73 in 2019. The total number of trees includes private and public land in Eden Prairie.

The City's EAB management plan highlights three main areas of management: ash preservation through chemical treatment, proactive removal and replacement of ash trees, and public outreach and education.

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A recent ash tree inventory revealed 906 ash trees within maintained areas of City parks; 1,295 ash trees within City right-of-way areas; and 963 ash trees located in unmaintained areas adjacent to City trails. Stufft noted the inventory can change year to year. Confirmed EAB infestations have recently been discovered in the eastern third of the City and treatment is scheduled to begin in those areas this fall. EAB inspections are best done in fall/winter. Ross inquired and Stufft responded treatment for EAB is incredibly effective if the correct amount of treatment is used, treatment is done by a reputable company, and treatment remains on a three-year cycle.

Stufft provided a summary of treatment programs performed on public and private land by Rainbow Treecare. Residents of Eden Prairie participated in Rainbow's municipal program at almost twice the rate of their average participation in other cities. Ross inquired and Bourne responded he will confirm the discount provided from Rainbow and which size trees are eligible.

The process of pre-emptive removal allows for some ash trees to be removed prior to dying from EAB to manage costs, aesthetics, and workloads.

It is the City's policy to replace removed ash trees at the rate of 1.5 trees for each tree removed. A total of 345 trees were planted on public property in 2018 and 411 planted in 2019. Stufft displayed a map illustrating where trees were planted in 2018, intend to be planted in 2019, and planned for 2020. Planting numbers have increased between 2018 and 2019 but the City plans to maintain in 2020.

Stufft displayed an example of a flyer mailed to residents as part of public education and outreach efforts. The City has an estimated 50,000 ash trees in maintained areas and ash trees make up 14 percent of all maintained trees. Link inquired and Stufft responded that Staff make suggestions to residents for replacement and provide a species list. Bourne added that information is also on the City's website.

Funding sources for tree replacement include Hennepin County grants, DNR grants, and the City's tree fund, which is an option for developers to pay into if they cannot meet the tree replacement requirement on their project site.

Stufft concluded by stating the City is following best practices by focusing on diversity which will highly decrease overall mortality.

E. PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR

1. Rental Policy

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Lotthammer provided information recently presented to Council regarding recommended modifications to the City's policy on rental facilities, specifically concerning cancelations and parameters of 5k walk/runs.

He presented information provided by Community Center Manager Verley. Every few years Staff evaluates the policy for Community Use of Parks and Recreation Rental Facilities to ensure the policy is relevant based on new facilities and amenities being added to the City's Parks system. Revisions were last made to this policy in 2016.

The first modification is to remedy the high volume of cancelations that continue to increase. Through September 2019, sixty-eight cancelations have resulted in the City issuing over \$13,000 in refunds. Often a resident will reserve multiple dates for their event and forget to cancel the extra dates until the last minute. The goal in the proposed modifications is to cut the refund amount in half, through incentivizing renters to be proactive and timely with a cancelation, so the rental facility can be available to other Eden Prairie residents.

Currently the rental fee is 100 percent refundable if the cancellation notice is received no less than ten days prior to the date of the scheduled event. Substantial research from surrounding communities assisted Staff in producing a proposed refund policy with staggered penalties based on the number of days out the cancelation is received.

Link inquired and Brink responded there is no rate difference between Eden Prairie residents and non-residents because the City only rents to Eden Prairie residents. All facility rentals are booked in person at the Community Center and the revised policy will be made clear.

Since facility rentals for the coming year become available to rent on January 2, Rahman inquired if staggered booking days would give more people more opportunities. Lotthammer responded in considering most events, the City doesn't book out far enough the way it is by opening the majority of bookings in January.

The second proposed modification to the policy is to change parameters of 5k walk/runs. Information provided by Verley stated the volume of walk/runs overtakes a park, not allowing for use of the amenities by residents during that time. Currently walk/runs have been taking place in both Purgatory Creek Park and Staring Lake Park. The new amenities added to Staring Lake Park in the past few years (new playground, new pickleball court complex, and new park building) make it no longer a suitable fit to successfully host walk/runs. The structure and amenities of Purgatory Creek Park lend well to a successful 5k with ample parking, trails that do not cross any roadways, and a pavilion. Staff proposes allowing walk/runs at Purgatory Creek Park only.

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Two other issues currently part of the policy but which will be enforced going forward are: 1) allowing only two walk/runs per month, per park. The purpose of this is to safeguard park access for Eden Prairie residents to Purgatory Creek Park, especially with apartment complexes going up in the area, and 2) only Eden Prairie non-profit groups are eligible to host a walk/run. This will result in previous non-qualifying 5k groups to find a new (non-Eden Prairie) location.

Motion: Pesheck moved, seconded by Erickson, to recommend the City Council approve modifications to the Policy of Community Use of Parks and Recreation Rental Facilities. **Motion carried 7-0.**

The recommendation will be presented to Council on October 15 for formal approval and put into place for 2020.

2. 2019 PRNR Work Plan.

Lotthammer presented an updated 2019 work plan indicating a tour of the new Staring Lake Park building on November 4. Future topics will include the 2020 Commission dates and a Master Plan update.

Link reminded Commission members to recommend topics at any time or to email Lotthammer with ideas for agenda items.

X. NEXT MEETING

The next PRNR Commission meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 4, at 7 p.m. at the new Staring Lake Park building.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Ross moved, seconded by McGlasson, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried 7-0. Chair Link adjourned the meeting at 8:47 p.m.