



Park & Recreation Commission Minutes of the Meeting
Public Safety Building
March 22, 2023

Call to Order/Roll Call

Tom Greenhalgh called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm

Members present: Brian Clerkin, Sean Clerkin, Tom Greenhalgh, Andy Macko, Nicole Peterson

Staff present: Kevin Hansen, Public Works Director/City Engineer; Keith Windschitl, Recreation Director; Connie Buesgens, Council Representative; Kelli Bourgeois, City Manager

Consent Agenda

Motion by S Clerkin, second by Macko, to approve the consent agenda. Upon vote: All ayes. **Motion Carried.**

Letters and Requests

A letter of request for a further reduced or waived rental fee of Murzyn Hall for a fundraiser for the Nordeast Brewers Alliance homebrew club.

Resident Jason Berg, Communications Director for the Nordeast Brewers Alliance homebrew club. The group, along with other regional homebrew clubs put together an event called Brew For Good. This is a homebrew only festival. Donations are accepted at the door with proceeds going to support East Side Neighborhood Services. The group is asking to use Murzyn Hall with the rental fee waived or further discounted. S Clerkin asked if any of the members live in Columbia Heights. Berg replied that he is a resident. Windschitl indicated a security officer is required during most rentals of Murzyn Hall. The fee is thirty-five dollars per hour with a minimum of four hours covered. Windschitl discussed the requirements using the security officer services during events at Murzyn Hall.

Motion by S Clerkin, second by Macko, to approve the nonprofit nonresident rental fee of a \$70 facility fee and \$60 per hour for the use of John P Murzyn Hall for Brew For Good. Proper liquor liability insurance must be provided listing the City of Columbia Heights as additional insured. Upon vote: All ayes. **Motion Carried.**

A letter of request for a reduced rental fee of Murzyn Hall on Friday June 2, 2023 to host a Columbia Heights High School Latin Prom.

Windschitl indicated this group had this event last year. The person in charge of the event again does live in Fridley but attends CHHS, and their family would be the renter. Last year the Commission approved the nonprofit nonresident rental rate. For this year that same approval would be the a \$70 facility fee and \$60 per hour for the use of John P Murzyn Hall plus tax. This year the group is requesting to have the event end at 12am with everyone out of the facility by 1am, but staff feels with it being a High School prom that is not suggested. Windschitl reported last year the group was approved to end the dance at 11pm with everyone including vendors out of the facility by 12am. S Clerkin asked if there were any issues with the group. Windschitl replied the event went very well.

Motion by S Clerkin, second by B Clerkin, to approve the nonprofit nonresident rental fee of a \$70 facility fee

plus tax and \$60 per hour plus tax for the use of John P Murzyn Hall, plus the requirement of a security officer for the CHHS Latin Prom on June 2, 2023. The event should end at 11pm and everyone is out of the facility by 12am. Upon vote: All ayes. **Motion Carried.**

Old Business

Greenhalgh asked how the CoHi Con event went. S Clerkin replied it went very well and that the group had to turn vendors away because the spots were sold out. It was a very successful event. Macko replied as a person who attended the event it was awesome. There was a variety of activities from little kids up to grandparents. Everyone was happy. It was nice to have plenty of parking. It was a fantastic time.

New Business

Hansen revisited some of what the Park & Recreation Commission has done to date in the past and discussed where things are at for the future. In 2018 the Commission reviewed each park for possible redevelopment. Based on those comments they developed a summary Capital Improvement Plan. In other words, what it would take to redevelop each individual park. Almost half of the parks have been redeveloped. Hansen indicated the issue right now is that there is no funding left in the park redevelopment plan. This funding is mostly supported through small annual budget amounts given to that fund each year through the annual budget and through major redevelopment. There isn't sufficient funds in there to do any redevelopment. Due to the many changes staff are seeing in the general supply chain but also with general pricing, staff would like to see updates from the previously prepared park improvement plans in 2018, 2019, and 2020. The goal is to complete the park system. The WSB consulting firm, who worked on most of our park updates, was hired to review the plans.

Edgemoor Park. The image from 2020 was shown. Currently there is a small playground. The park is a third of an acre. Previously the plan was to update the play equipment but not really add any other amenities. There isn't room to add anything. Hansen reminded the Commission to keep in mind during the redevelopment process is to keep a balance of greenspace. The original estimate from 2019 had a cost of \$85,000. Based on WSB's estimates the cost of just a playset is \$145,000 at 2024 costs. The installation is being done by Public Works staff. Hansen pointed out that any new equipment will be ADA accessible. Greenhalgh asked what age group the play equipment is geared towards. Hansen replied most of the parks will be ages 5 to 12.

Hilltop Park. Hansen indicated this park is similar in size and what is currently onsite. S Clerkin indicated he forgets about that park. Hansen replied that a lot of people do. The land area is a little bit larger than Edgemoor Park. This park borders residential property on almost all sides of the park. There are a few exterior amenities such as a grill, and then a play structure on this one-acre park. The cost is identical to Edgemoor Park.

Gauvitte Park. Hansen indicated this park has not had any work done on it. There is a long-term plan that has nothing to do with the park. This is a hidden and underutilized space. There is a small parking lot and the only access to the park. There is an easement along the southeast edge of the park but that is over a parking lot to allow city vehicles to get into the park. The CIP from 2018-2019 cuts Gauvitte Park almost in half to become a stormwater pond. From a geographic perspective this is the only area that the City has available to do stormwater improvements. These are requirements that need to be done in the next five to seven years. This is because 44th Avenue is a main trunk line for stormwater and takes in about 60% in terms of the drainage area of the city and from there it flows into the Mississippi River. Rivers are segmented by reach and have pollution requirements that will affect us. In order to achieve what we need to do to reduce pollution for two things, phosphorus and fecal contaminates, mostly from wildlife. By using the north third of the park we will be able to create a surge reserve and overflow area. This offers two solutions by treating the water and the other to alleviate flooding issues. One other component is that it is difficult to offer this type of park facility and not have

adequate parking. The plan includes about thirty spots for parking. There could be a potential 72x120 yard soccer area if there was available parking. The costs are broken up between what the actual costs of the park is and what the stormwater improvements will be. Geographically the stormwater pond must go on the north side of the park, and that removes the basketball court, the playground area, and the shelter. Staff feels those costs should be supported through any stormwater funding. The basketball court and playground set would be moved to the middle of the park and introduce a soccer field. Macko replied the hockey rink and overgrown baseball field would be removed. Hansen replied yes and from what he knows they do not get used. The costs are broken into two parts. Park improvements look at adding a soccer field, things to the south, and a trail around the park so people can get to the amenities. With the storm pond the estimates would include what the storm pond is taking out. This would replace the playground set, basketball court, and adding a 24x24 shelter. The investment cost is close to two million dollars but the largest portion of that is for stormwater management. Greenhalgh asked if this cost estimate includes buying one of the houses around the park. Hansen replied yes. Peterson asked if there would be irrigation. Hansen replied no. The only park where irrigation would be installed is at Huset Park. The placement of irrigation depends on what programming is happening at that location and availability. The other item to consider is the maintenance of an irrigation system and costs associated with that.

Keyes Park. This park was part of a master plan that has had items completed and this current review identified elements that have not been completed. The two elements that need to be completed are the concrete walking path around the park, connecting to Reservoir Boulevard. The other item is to add onto the current building a shelter with picnic tables. A new building is estimated to be around \$550,000 and a remodeled building around \$450,000. The sidewalk is approximately \$200,000.

Ramsdell Park. This park has also had master planning completed. One of the primary improvements here is a regulation softball field for High School girls softball. There is an added trail, a newer play structure and shelter. The original master plan continued the walking trail to the north end of the park and replaced the wading pool with a smaller splash pad. S Clerkin asked what the cost comparison is between a splash pad and modifying an existing pool with a ramp. Hansen replied with our current wading pools it would destroy the structure of the pool to add a ramp and filtration. The new code requirements are the number of turnovers and where you have to draw water from. We have to draw water from the bottom of the pool. Any time you make major improvements to a structure you are required to bring that up to current codes. Hansen continued that the splash pad at Huset Park is 3300 square feet and the proposed one is about 2500 square feet. For comparison the Huset Park splash pad when built was about \$525,000 and even though this one is smaller it will be more expensive at approximately \$550,000. This park has also been discussed previously as having a skate park. This would be a built in, poured concrete park estimated at \$575,000. S Clerkin asked if this would be grant funded. Hansen replied, a skate park is not in the current Parks CIP. Right now, there is a request through the state legislation with money going towards skate parks and Hansen believes that Columbia Heights is one of the cities listed in that request. With past Park & Recreation Commissions there were two things discussed on how the projects would happen in regard to funding. The skate park is over half a million dollars and where should that fall in the priority list. The other item is the dog park. The decision was made to still include these amenities but look for other funding sources or the priority would be lower on the overall list. Greenhalgh asked where the skate park would be located. Hansen replied the corner of 49th and Johnson Street. Peterson asked if that land is owned by the school district. Hansen replied that discussions with the past administration of the school district regarding the use of that land space they were open to having something like a skate park there.

Lomianki Park. This park has the oldest playset that staff would like to replace and keep as a park amenity. Some of the added features would be a small parking lot, replacing the building with a 24x24 shelter, adding a shed for storage, and adding a walking path. The construction estimate is \$475,000.

McKenna Park. This neighborhood park is just under eight and a half acres. There isn't any parking here other than street parking. The two existing ballfields cannot be used at the same time because the outfields overlap. There is a hockey rink that serves multipurpose. S Clerkin said it is very busy with volleyball. Hansen replied yes, but also for pickleball. The playset is newer. During previous discussions the decision was to only operate two splash pads in the city and then remove the wading pool at this location. The proposed general layout would remove the existing building and install a parking lot. A 300-foot ballfield would maintain and have a soccer field. There would be a walking trail connecting the east and west side of the park. The existing hockey rink would be repaved and leveled for multipurpose use; ice hockey in the winter and then volleyball and pickleball in the summer. Greenhalgh asked if both ballfields are in the update. Hansen replied no, there would be one ballfield with a soccer field overlap. Hansen indicated McKenna Park ends up being a fairly expensive park for a number of reasons. One of the large areas being the addition of a parking lot and removal of the building. Redoing the softball field and grading the area to have a soccer field overlay. The addition of a shelter would be located closer to the playground and soccer field. The estimated construction cost is \$1,350,000. S Clerkin replied it was unfortunate the old McKenna Park building with sliding glass doors was changed. Peterson asked about the participation numbers of softball and baseball. Windschitl replied the youth girls softball program has really good numbers right now, there is a good group of parents helping to run this program, but he added down the road you don't know what might happen. The number of baseball participants has declined. Adult softball has decent participation.

LaBelle Park. This is another park that went through the master planning process. Hansen reported the lights along the west side trail should be replaced to LED lights. New LED lights would be added to the remaining trail along the east side of the park. The total replacement is about \$100,000. The cost for a new fixture is \$2,500 each and there are eight. The cost for a single pedestrian light pole is about \$8,500 each; there are eight of those as well. The city operates three aerators on the pond and has been unable to operate them for the past two years. The reason is because the water level is lower, and the pond is getting filled in. The aerators need a certain distance between the pond surface to where they draw up the water and no other bottom material. Due to this staff are looking at a pond dredge. This was previously done around the year 2000. This is an extensive DNR process. Peterson asked how deep the pond is. Hansen replied in most places it is two to four feet and around six feet at its deepest.

Ostrander Park. This park was built on remanent land and has recently been causing issues. This is the worst park for settlement issues. Settlement continues to happen in the middle of the greenspace where the recreational skating rink goes. The building isn't usable due to the bottom of the it has settled out. All of the piping for sanitary sewer, water, and gas has separated because everything dropped. The playground set is well past its useful life. The updated plan would redo the hockey rink. It is currently grass and would be paved for multipurpose. The playset would need to be replaced and the installation of a small picnic shelter near that area. There would be a walking path through the park and keep greenspace in the center area. Estimated construction costs are \$550,000.

Prestemon Park. This was one of the first parks worked on. When the ballfield was built lighting was added. Playground equipment was added and needs replacement due to age and lack of part replacement availability. A picnic shelter would be added close to the active features. Both parking lots need repavement. The current small building would be removed. This park was also discussed previously for a potential dog park in the southeast corner. Other additions would be more trails and redoing the basketball court. Construction estimates \$825,000.

Sullivan Lake Park. This was included in the first master planning effort along with Silver Lake Park. Sullivan Park is viewed as an active park system with a highly used trail. The shelter is rented out all summer long. The tennis court is beyond its useful life. Past discussion was to rebuild and maintain the tennis court. A long time ago when Sullivan Lake was dredged, they did not export the mucky material and instead it was placed in the area where the tennis courts are. This means the land will need to be cleaned up, sand brought in, and the tennis courts reconstructed. Due to the material under the courts, there are a lot of frost heaves. The perimeter fencing and nets move all the time. With the size of this park and the small size of the playground, previous discussions were to include an accessible/inclusive play area on the north side of the shelter. Estimated construction costs are \$600,000 mainly for the two amenities of the tennis courts and inclusive play area.

Wargo Court. The master plan is done. The park was reformatted. The fountain is broken and needs to be removed. The retaining walls are deteriorating. The landscape is past its useful life. Greenhalgh asked if we had heard from the Wargo family. Hansen replied yes, he met with them. They had some comments on the master plan but nothing significant. This plan was estimated at \$400,000.

Huset Park is divided between the East and West Sides.

Huset Park West involves getting the ballfields down from four to three fields to allow for a future building addition onto Murzyn Hall or a possible civic plaza perspective. There would be space allocated for future development. The master plan calls for a connection between Mill Street and Huset Parkway. While trying to keep the same number of parking spaces, with the primary goal of improving drop-off and accessibility to the facility. One item not included in the example that was just called back from the MWMO is water quality improvements and partnering on the work for that. Another item is to construct a primary building for concessions, scores, and storage after the removal of the block garage building. Based on past reports we do know that there is soil contamination on both sides of the park. Construction estimates have a few unknown numbers to account for contaminated soil. There are electrical problems that serve this area and would need to be completely redone at an estimate of almost \$100,000. Stormwater improvements would be a shared cost at an estimate of \$400,000. Irrigation is identified on all three of the fields. The total estimated construction costs approximately 3 million dollars.

Huset Park East. Part of the master plan involved moving Jefferson Street to fit in the pinwheel of the ballfields. If that occurs the Jefferson building would be removed. The roadway would come out of other funds. A soccer field would be introduced to the east side. The plan indicates replacing some of the amenities removed by the road reconstruction. A shelter, small play area, and greenspace would be placed. Paved parking would be off Jefferson Street with overflow grass parking. The adult ballfield would still have lights. A drainage pond is required to treat runoff water and flood control. S Clerkin asked if there is a type of grass durable to withhold having the carnival in the field. Hansen replied yes. The other items that help are athletic field mixes and if the field has irrigation staff can maintain the condition of the fields. The construction cost estimate includes the roadway at approximately 1.2 million, with a total estimate of 3.7 million.

Hansen concluded the 2023 updated estimate for everything is around 15 million. Staff would pursue and continue to look at outside funding. The roadway costs would come out and there are opportunities to partner with organizations such as the MWMO for stormwater improvements. It is estimated between 1.2 to 1.5 million would come from outside funding. Hansen indicated the costs have increased from approximately 10 million to 15 million. The next step is to have a discussion with the financial consultant and look at different ways to provide financing for this.

Motion by S Clerkin, second by Peterson, to recommend the summary Parks Capital Improvement Plan to the City Council for consideration of funding park improvements to complete renovations / updates to the City Park System. Upon vote: All ayes. **Motion Carried.**

Peterson replied that this is a lot of money but for all the improvements as a whole it isn't a lot of money. The playground equipment costs have increased. Hansen replied that with the age of most of the playground equipment in the city you cannot get parts to replace broken pieces. Many calls are received asking why there isn't a slide, and it is because staff cannot get anything to connect to the old equipment. B Clerkin asked what the timeframe is for everything. Hansen replied the next step is to work with the bond consultant and present that to the city council. It all depends on what the city council wants to do, are they willing to do this in a short time frame or do they want to phase it in. Hansen feels the improvements will need to be phased in. The public works building has to get replaced in its current condition.

Community Outreach

City Manager Bourgeois indicated there have been a lot of community events started during the 100th Anniversary and a lot are continuing. The SnowBlast, Community Art & Info Fair, Pets in the Park, movies, and music in the park. However, there is a gap. Bourgeois asked the commission if they are at other events, hear of other ideas, or see ways to improve what is being offered to please let Hansen know or contact the Events Coordinator Will Rottler in administration. Staff want to see the commission members be the ears and eyes on the ground to give feedback on what we are offering. Please offer feedback on what is seen as a positive and what can be improved. She invited the members to ask their neighbors and fellow community members as well. Macko asked if there is a specific timeframe that staff would like feedback or is there a specific area or general to the whole city. Bourgeois replied there is not a specific timeframe and staff are always open to feedback. She indicated the members know the parks facilities well, Rottler also grew up in Columbia Heights, so he knows the area well. Rottler tries to move events around the city to benefit the community as a whole and not burden one specific park. Huset Park just tends to be the park used most often because of its size.

Reports

A. Recreation Director

Windschitl reported the Senior Citizen Coordinator, Delynn Mulligan, gave her notice of resignation. There were some really good candidates that applied and interviewed. An offer was extended to Candy Lack and she accepted. She used to work for the City and has continued to teach art classes to the seniors and active agers. She already has a rapport with many of the senior participants.

Windschitl indicated the refrigerator has been replaced in the commercial kitchen at Murzyn Hall. He thanked the Public Works staff for their help with the removal of the old one and getting the new one into the building.

B. Public Works Director/City Engineer

Hansen apologized for not knowing about the question of the charge at Wargo Court and will verify with Cullen. He indicated that many things are just beyond replacement at Wargo Court.

The Public Works Department is looking for seasonal staff. Hansen asked the Commission to help spread the work to anyone 18 years or older looking for a job. The seasonal wage has been adjusted and is now \$17 per hour for the summer.

Greenhalgh asked about filling potholes. Hansen indicated 37th Avenue is getting reconstructed this year and will start in three or four weeks. There has been a lack of supply for filling the potholes because the season has been

so terrible. There is a blacktop plant opening on Monday which will be a long-term fix for the problem. Buesgens indicated there is a report a pothole link on the City website.

C. Commission Members

Greenhalgh thanked S Clerkin for his time on the Commission as this meeting is the last one for his term.

S Clerkin proposed for the Commission to not have monthly meetings because it is not necessary to hold them that frequently. There should be a meeting set for in the Fall and then as needed, conduct a meeting. When a park is being developed there should be a meeting. During the park development process you could look to former Commission members to see if they want to help be a part of the new developments. There is not a lot of work that can be done so the Commission does not need to meet. S Clerkin feels we should move on from requiring monthly meetings. Other than that, he has enjoyed his time on the Commission and the process.

B Clerkin indicated he will be resigning from the Commission and today is his last meeting as well. Bourgeois informed B Clerkin that he will need to submit a written resignation. Greenhalgh thanked him for his service and wished the Clerkin's well with the Tasty Pizza business. S Clerkin replied they were very honored when Todd Estrem approached them about taking over the business.

Buesgens invited the Commission to an 11:30 virtual MNDOT meeting tomorrow regarding the construction of Central and University Avenues.

Greenhalgh asked what the status is of John P Murzyn Hall building updates. Hansen replied last week infrared images were taken of the roof and exterior walls. That analysis needs to be incorporated into the final facility analysis that will be given to the city council.

Greenhalgh adjourned the meeting at 7:15 pm.
Deanna Saefke, Recreation Secretary