



Park & Recreation Commission Minutes of the Meeting
John P Murzyn Hall, Senior Center – 530 Mill Street
January 25, 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: David Cullen, Public Works Street/Parks Superintendent; Deanna Saefke, Commission Secretary; Keith Windschitl, Recreation Director; Amada Marquez Simula, Council Representative

Consent Agenda

Greenhalgh asked if the ballfield lights had been fixed at Huset field 5. Windschitl replied yes all but one light fixture. Cullen replied the repair was done by two different companies in order to rush and fix the lights. Windschitl added even with the one fixture out games can still be played with plenty of light. At the end of the season he rented fields in Fridley to complete the adult softball season. Fridley has a lot of the same lighting problems with their old light fixtures as well.

Marquez Simula asked what the expense is for Wargo Court on October 4th. Cullen replied he is aware of some flagpole issues but is unaware of that particular charge at this time. He doesn't believe that charge is for that repair but will look into in and report back.

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

Letters and Requests

Letter of request from ARAHA in Columbia heights for a nonprofit rental fee of Murzyn Hall on April 1st for their community dinner. The request is to use the facility from 10am until 11pm or when cleanup is completed. Windschitl reported the ARAHA organization is located on Jackson Street and 39th Street. They are a nonprofit and have used our facility in the past. They did receive the nonprofit resident rental rate previously. Currently that rate would be a \$70 facility fee and \$30 per hour of use. S Clerkin asked if that is the new rate. Windschitl replied that is the new rate set back in July of 2022. He feels when the rates are discussed again in the future, he feels this should be increased slightly to cover the higher wage scale for staffing.

Macko mentioned in the letter that they expect to be done by 11 pm and ending the event at 10 pm with a few hours of cleanup, which might take more time at the end. Do we hold them to a hard end time or make accommodations for the group ahead of time. Saefke replied with events like this that are billed at an hourly rate we verify the ending time of facility use with the JPM staff and she bills the group for the exact time used.

Motion by S Clerkin, second by B Clerkin, to approve the nonprofit rental fee of a \$70 facility fee and \$30 per hour for the use of John P Murzyn Hall for the ARAHA on April 1. Upon vote: All ayes. **Motion Carried.**

Letter of request from the CoHi Con organizers for a reduced or waived rental fee of Murzyn Hall on March 4, 2023 from 8am-1am for a community gaming convention event.

Marquez Simula indicated this is being planned with other people who plan a 2D Con which is two dimensional gaming, board games and video gaming. They plan a convention of their own and are partnering to do this event. She stated this is a first time event and that is why they are asking to waive the fee due to the unknown popularity of the event. There will be karaoke at night as well. This event is for all ages beginning at 10am. The lower rooms of Murzyn Hall will be used for board games with people who are very serious in their playing and will be here for a number of hours. The LaBelle Lounge will be used for family movies or cartoons playing throughout the day. The main hall will be a family space for games, crafts, and there will be a cereal bar. At 7pm the event will be 21 plus for a karaoke party with a Lions Club bar. The event is planned to finish at 11pm and hoping to be out by 12am with cleaning. For this first-time event they are trying to keep the costs low for participants.

Macko asked what the charge will be to get in the door. Marquez Simula replied that is unknown and dependent upon the rental fee. They do want there to be a fee and feels this is very common for other types of events that offer a space for gaming like this. Windschitl asked what the requirements are for WIFI access. Marquez Simula replied some people would bring in screens and the games would be on a console system, and the regular City WIFI access will be fine for other usage. S Clerkin asked if the Senior Center is normally rented separately from the upstairs. Windschitl replied yes, but it is limited to daytime small group rentals. Marquez Simula added that she has discussed details with Saefke and the people that would be using the lower level rooms for gaming are a serious crowd that will be quiet, and would not want to participate in the upstairs party after 7pm. They will have minimal cleanup when they are done as well. There would also be volunteers walking throughout the facility making sure there isn't any poor behavior happening. She also believes the group in the lower level would ask anyone being loud or causing a disruption in the hallway to go back upstairs.

S Clerkin agrees with offering the \$70 facility fee and \$30 per hour of use. Saefke indicated that would be approximately \$580 for the entire day. N Peterson indicated that seems a little high no knowing the attendance. She asked if the Commission would entertain waiving a portion of the fee or giving a further discount. S Clerkin replied he doesn't feel the hall should operate at a loss. That is a cheap fee for an all-day event. N Peterson asked if the lower fee is a break-even point. Windschitl replied more or less but probably doesn't cover the cost of the full operation of the building including staff costs with fringe benefits and usage of lights, heating and air. Macko believes this is a fair price. N Peterson sees it from both sides regarding the fees. S Clerkin replied the Lions Club has done events in the past where the first time it was offered was at a financial loss.

Motion by S Clerkin, second by B Clerkin, to approve the nonprofit rental fee of a \$70 facility fee and \$30 per hour for the use of John P Murzyn Hall for CoHi Con on March 4, 2023. Upon vote: All ayes. **Motion Carried.**

Marquez Simula thanked the Commission for the reduced nonprofit rate.

Letter of request for a private host bar for a 60th birthday party on July 14, 2023.

Greenhalgh introduced an added request for an open bar on 7-14-23 for a 60th birthday party. Windschitl indicated the family has rented Murzyn Hall numerous times and this person had their wedding here a few years ago. They would like to bring in their own alcohol and have an approved bartender to serve. Windschitl stated the main reason that the bar service was changed to be handled by the Lions Club is due to liability. S Clerkin asked if they are affiliated with many other families that have been renting the hall. Saefke replied yes. S Clerkin asked if a precedence is being set if this is allowed for one family. Windschitl replied he believes yes, we would be. Saefke replied that the decision could be made to indicate this is the last event that will be allowed to have an open bar. With the increase in rental rates many of their family members who were going to book events with us are not booking the parties like they used to. Windschitl indicated they have been good renters, but it

only takes one time for something bad to happen. This is a liability for the renters, the bartenders, and potentially the City. S Clerkin asked if they have provided insurance in the past. Windschitl replied all renters do provide a copy of their homeowner's liability insurance coverage for using the facility. There is no additional requirements for a bar service. B Clerkin indicated that he is willing to talk with the renter to see what they are looking for and if there is a way to still use the Lions Club for bartending. Greenhalgh replied the request will be tabled. S Clerkin said yes to table the request.

Motion by B Clerkin, second by S Clerkin, to table the request until details can be discussed with the renter. Upon vote: All ayes. **Motion Carried.**

Letter of request from the Debre Selam Medahnealem Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church for a reduced rental fee of Murzyn Hall on May 6, 2023.

S Clerkin asked if this organization is located in Columbia Heights. Saefke replied no, Minneapolis. This group has rented in the past and has members who live in Columbia Heights. Their previous rentals were in February and March during slower rental times and the group did receive a reduced nonprofit rental rate for those events. Windschitl indicated the nonprofit nonresident rental rate would be a \$70 facility/entry fee and \$60 per hour of use. Saefke asked the Commission if they want to discount a Saturday reservation now that the rental rate is the same for Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. Windschitl explained the previous decision of the Commission was not to give any discounted rates on a Saturday because it was a premium rental, but now the rate is the same for the entire weekend. He considers Saturdays a premium day of the week, however Friday offers more available rental time in the package. S Clerkin asked what time of the day the event is. Saefke replied later in the day but didn't remember what was discussed. Possibly a 3pm until 11pm or midnight. N Peterson indicated this is why we have a nonresident nonprofit rate. She is open to offer that rate.

Motion by S Clerkin, second by Peterson, to approve the nonresident nonprofit rate of the \$70 facility fee and \$60 per hour for the use of John P Murzyn Hall. Upon vote: All ayes. **Motion Carried.**

Old Business

None at this time.

New Business

6. Senior Citizen Coordinator Delynn Mulligan discussed the Active Agers Program and gave a handout of current activities being offered.

Mulligan presented the regular and on-going programs being offered are many card groups like bridge, Skip-Bo, 500, and cribbage. There are also programs like weekly Bingo and movies shown in the Senior Center. She teaches a seated exercise program two or more times per week. The way in which people are informed about the programs is through the Monthly Active Agers Newsletter with an activities calendar on last page. Participants can pick up a physical copy of the newsletter at Murzyn Hall, City Hall, CH Library, Heights Manor, Immaculate Conception Church, First Lutheran Church, The Legends of CH, LaBelle Condos, and Crestview Communities. This is also posted on the city website.

Throughout the year Mulligan offers various entertainment where a singer would come to the Senior Center. There are mini day trips to places like restaurants, museums, and various stores. The Active Agers Program has various partnerships with different organizations to bring resources to participants. AARP teaches a four-hour safe driving refresher course every other month and comes to Murzyn Hall to offer free tax prep assistance. The SACA Food Shelf drops off or we pick up excess food. This is not just for seniors and many people in the community will stop by. S Clerkin asked if that happens on Mondays. Mulligan replied that we never know when

they are going to bring food and it is not on any schedule. There are several people who have requested to be on a texting list when there is available food. Windschitl indicated that this is very popular, and the food goes quickly. Mulligan works with the CH Library to offer Wine & Words Book Club and Poems in the Parks during nicer months. CH Community Education is working with Mulligan to offer several programs and outings such as the MN State Capitol & Cossetta's, a trip to the Como Conservatory, and a car fit seminar. One of our previous office employees, Candy Lack, works here two Saturdays per month teaching art classes. These classes are very popular. This is a paid class, but still very affordable and high-quality classes. Mulligan partnered with a local senior to develop a hiking group. This senior will go to local parks in and around Columbia Heights to meet with anyone that doesn't want to walk on their own. Their schedule is posted in the Active Agers Newsletter each month. A flu shot clinic is offered every fall. True Partners Insurance offers Medicare clinics in the fall. Keller/Williams Realty comes to the Senior Center to talk about downsizing and selling homes.

Mulligan stated she is open to any new ideas or suggestions for programming. Marquez Simula added and gave Mulligan kudos for the Senior Consortium group and asked her to elaborate on it. Mulligan replied that Marquez Simula may have started this group. The consortium is made up of individuals who work with senior citizens in Columbia Heights and the surrounding communities. The group meets via zoom once a month to discuss upcoming events and issues or concerns that seniors may need. She feels this is a very good group for everyone involved. This group includes people from local senior living communities, the library, community education, local churches, Anoka County people, and anyone that works with senior citizens. Marquez Simula replied this is a great group to offer advice and give resources for the Columbia Heights Senior Citizens. S Clerkin thanked Mulligan for her work and stated she is a very busy person. Windschitl thanked Mulligan and stated that staff receive many compliments on the program and it is a very nice asset to have for our community. He added if anyone knows of seniors looking for something to do please tell them about the program because there is great programming that they can get involved in. Mulligan added that many senior citizens do not feel comfortable driving far or asking their families to take them places but do not mind driving to Murzyn Hall. They are so appreciative of the city van to be able to get out to other places. Marquez Simula received a card thanking her for her support of the senior center and that Mulligan is amazing. They stated they are not able to get out to many places and are so thankful of the programs. She knows that one letter represents numerous people and wants to thank Mulligan for all she has done for the seniors in the community.

Reports

A. Recreation Director

Windschitl reported a recreation van was ordered from Ford in fall of 2021. He spoke to the rep today and they have no information on a production date. Ford builds the vehicles as they get the parts and they do not have the parts needed for this particular vehicle. The rep said there are a number of people waiting for vehicles.

The Hylander Center gym is being used by 5 youth boys basketball teams most weeknights. We also offered a women's basketball night and family soccer on Saturday mornings. Girls' softball teams were also using the gym for winter practices. Windschitl has also secured practice times for the teams in the elementary gyms and the high school side of the Hylander Center because of limited availability.

The Murzyn Hall HVAC required a \$2000 repair with one of the units in the attic. Everything is currently working well. There was also a repair with plumbing recently.

Windschitl reported the grant funding for last year, all of the allotted money was spent. That is approximately \$59,000, plus an additional \$10,000 awarded to the school but they had underspent some of their funds and allowed us to use that in our joint grant. The funding was spent on the after-school enrichment programs, which

a lot of that is the summer park programs. This is currently the last year that we are receiving funding with this grant and that ends in Fall of 2023. We have not heard back if we have received an extension.

B. Public Works Director/City Engineer

Cullen reported Hansen is working with consultants on the park master plan. They are reviewing the plan that was developed in 2018/2019. There are cost increases over time and now there has been a focus or direction shift within the overall master plan. This is an ongoing process. Once the focus is clear they will work on how much that is going to cost and what the final number might look like and report back to the Commission. Saefke added Hansen thought he would have information for the Commission in the next month or two.

S Clerkin asked if there is any information on bonding for the parks. Cullen replied not that he is aware of. Greenhalgh asked if all of the security cameras are running at the parks. Cullen replied in the building where the main power source is for the Huset cameras they were having problems. Aid Electric was hired to repair those issues. Another problem was with a master reset box where a bucket truck is required to get access to it and that dealt with the wireless issue. Windschitl added he believes that all the cameras are working. Xcel installed a new cable line from Mill Street back to the block garage behind Murzyn Hall. Cullen added when that installation happened the crew caught one of the legs on a telephone pole that had been tripped. They repaired the tripped transformer and that may have been one of the issues with the cameras as well.

C. Commission Members

Marquez Simula asked if the St Patrick's Day Parade is happening again this year. S Clerkin replied yes. Marquez Simula asked if the parade is on the 17th. S Clerkin replied yes on Friday. Marquez Simula asked if the parade route is on Huset. B Clerkin replied it begins on Van Buren, to 40th St, then proceeds West to 5th St, and unloads behind Murzyn Hall. The party will be inside Murzyn Hall with Irish Food, a Lions Club bar, music, Irish Dancers, and more. Marquez Simula asked if the Lions Club members are helping with the event. B Clerkin replied yes, they are working the door, the bar, and helping with the parade route.

Saefke stated Snow Blast is February 4th at Huset Park from 4-7pm. B Clerkin added the Lions Club is selling hot rum cider and an Irish hot chocolate in addition to beer. Windschitl stated there will be a heated tent, pony rides. Saefke indicated Joe Macko will be playing his accordion.

Cullen added the Public Works staff have been working really hard to keep up the ice rinks this year. Minneapolis has closed many of their ice rinks but we have kept our three open. There has been a lot of snow, the ice heats up, and slush builds up. They are trying really hard to have good ice for Snow Blast.

Greenhalgh adjourned the meeting at 6:27 pm.
Deanna Saefke, Recreation Secretary