



Park Commission Meeting

February 5, 2024

7:00 PM

Fridley City Hall, 7071 University Avenue NE

Minutes

Call to Order

Chair Borman called the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present

Luke Cardona
Peter Borman
Suad Maow
Don Whalen

Absent

EB Graham
Tim Kirk
Ken Schultz

Also Present

Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director
Jesslyn Quiram, Engineering Technician

Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Agenda for February 5, 2024

Motion by Commissioner Cardona to approve the February 5, 2024 meeting agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Minutes for December 4, 2023 and January 2, 2024

Motion by Commissioner Cardona to approve the December 4, 2023 meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Maow. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Commissioner Cardona to approve the January 2, 2024 meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

1. Springbrook Nature Center Foundation Spree Event

Parks and Recreation Director Mike Maher introduced members from the Springbrook Nature Center Board who were present at the meeting.

Kim Tillberry, Allison, Egan, and Neal Hayford introduced themselves and provided information on the Springbrook Nature Center and the Foundation's upcoming Spree Event which will take place on April 6, 2024. They are still looking for donations and volunteers for the event. The Foundation is also looking for additional Board members. More information can be found on the website.

The Commission thanked the members of the Foundation for the work they do on behalf of the Springbrook Nature Center.

2. Commons Park Planning Update

Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director, provided background information on the Park System Improvement Plan and the themes and goals that were identified during that planning process. He stated that Commons Park is a unique site and is a larger community park. He provided the concept plan that was created in 2021 and noted that the goal would be to meet the needs of the community. He reviewed the current status and potential project timeline noting that they will continue to work on planning and community engagement throughout 2024. He provided information on the community vision for the Commons Park redevelopment to be inclusive and include four season recreation, community programs, and safety and security. He provided more details on what could potentially be included in the recreation building. He highlighted some potential wish list items for the park that had been mentioned during community engagement and reviewed the next steps and some additional discussion points.

Chair Borman reiterated that this is still in the concept phase, and nothing has yet been set in stone. He recognized that in order to accommodate the vision to recreate a destination park, some things will need to change. He also noted that when looking at the park it is difficult to determine what is City property and property owned by the School District as the spaces flow together.

Commissioner Cardona commented that it is nice to see this moving along, recognizing that they are very early in the planning and outreach process, but noted that this does look like it is shaping up to be a destination park. He asked for details on the upcoming community engagement events for this process. Mr. Maher recognized the primary stakeholder groups, noting that staff will meet with those parties in the next month which will be followed up with the typical process related to playground design.

Chair Borman asked and received confirmation that the building at this location is not currently used for park programming. Mr. Maher confirmed that the parks department does not currently use this space for its programming, but does partner with the school district and is a location for community education programming, and will plan to use the new building for future programming needs.

Jake Karnopp, Fridley School Board and Fridley Youth Baseball Association, stated that he was present tonight to see some of the plans being considered. He commented on the difficulty he had in finding the notice for the meeting and looked forward to a more robust presentation at the City Council meeting. He stated that last year there were 124 kids registered for youth baseball, with the majority of those being Fridley residents. He noted that not all Fridley residents attend schools in Fridley. He stated that there were seven teams playing on the two fields in Commons Park last year and provided details on the scheduling difficulties. He stated that if the plan remains as proposed, baseball will lose kids because there is not a safe crossing and there will not be enough space. He recognized that this is a big project and just wanted to ensure that their voices are heard. He commented that the current concept would have a negative impact on baseball which would then impact the soccer program as well. He recognized that the intent is to create a destination park, but wanted to ensure that the park was meant to be a destination for Fridley residents.

Commissioner Whalen appreciated the input and the desire for youth sports to be represented early in this process.

Mr. Karnopp provided details on the financial assistance provided through youth sports for those families that are unable to pay the registration costs. He also noted grants that the association has received that have assisted with providing equipment to children. He provided information on the other fields in Fridley and why, or why not, those would be viable options for play.

Chair Borman commented that he would like to make all park users happy, but recognized the difficulty for users to see what is City property and what is School District property. Mr. Karnopp provided details on the fields that are on City property and those that are on school property.

Commissioner Cardona asked the number of fields that would be removed in the concept. Mr. Maher noted that in the previous concept and the concept from 2021, both concepts would remove at least one or more baseball fields.

Mr. Karnopp stated that he would want to see two baseball fields remain to support the youth baseball program in Fridley.

3. Neighborhood Park Site Plan Review – Plymouth-Logan-Edgewater Gardens

Mr. Maher provided background information on the 2024 neighborhood park draft designs.

Jesslyn Quiram, Engineering Technician, began her presentation with Edgewater Gardens providing an overview of the already approved playground design for the park and overall park design. She highlighted changes from the concept to the design draft, explaining that those were guided by public input received. She then moved to Logan and the playground design that was approved by the Commission. She compared the original concept to the design draft, again noting that the changes were driven by input received from the public. She then moved to

Plymouth Square, highlighting the approved playground design and reviewing the design draft. She noted that there is not much difference between the concept and design draft.

Chair Borman commented that the plans look good and asked if construction would begin this year. Ms. Quiram confirmed that the plan is to begin construction this summer on these parks.

4. Fridley Parks and Recreation Mission and Vision

Mr. Maher stated that occasionally the group reviews the mission and vision to ensure those are still aligned with the current direction and focus. He stated that staff has drafted two versions of updated mission and vision statements for the Commission to review and provide input on.

Commissioner Whalen commented that he prefers version one of the updated statements. The Commission agreed.

Motion by Commissioner Whalen to adopt version one of the proposed mission and vision statements. Seconded by Commissioner Maow. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

Staff Reports

5. Springbrook Nature Center Report

Mr. Maher reviewed some highlights from the report including new carpeting in the classroom space, winter programming, and events.

6. Fridley Parks and Recreation Division Report

Mr. Maher stated that the program enrollment numbers were included in the packet for review. He stated that fall programming wrapped up and they are now in the winter programming. He recognized the poor weather conditions for outdoor skating, noting the season was about eight days long.

7. Park Maintenance and Construction Report

Mr. Maher provided a brief overview of the written report.

Chair Borman asked if the existing shelters at Moore Lake would be freshened up. Mr. Maher commented that there is one new shelter being installed in the place of an old shelter. He stated that they do hope to clean up the existing shelters with some new paint to match the aesthetic of the rest of the park.

Adjournment

Commissioner Cardona made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Staple
Recording Secretary