

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tiffany Bushland, Bruce Cantor, George Foulkes, Elizabeth Griffin, George Hagemann, Pete May and Rachel Salzer.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Rich Bluma.

STAFF PRESENT: Ben Manibog, Transportation Engineer, Mark Oestreich, Westwood Hills Nature Center Manager, Kori Shingles, Recreation and Facilities Supervisor, Alicia Sojourner, Racial Equity Manager, Cindy Walsh, Director of Operations and Recreation, Jason West, Recreation Superintendent and Stacy Voelker, Recording Secretary

1. Call to order

Commissioner Bushland called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. Presentation

None.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. August 29, 2018

Commissioner May advised of changes to the minutes as follows:

Page 2, paragraph 5, fourth sentence: "...will close the Cedar Lake Trail ~~Kenilworth corridor...~~"

Page 4, paragraph 1, last sentence, "...proposed a large dragonfly ~~dragon fly~~".

It was moved by Commissioner Hagemann, seconded by Commissioner Griffin, to approve the minutes of August 29, 2018 as amended. The motion passed 7 – 0.

4. Business

a. Connect the Park initiative

Mr. Manibog introduced himself and provided information packets to the members. The packets showing bikeways and various options for the bridge over the railroad tracks in

Dakota Park. These projects are scheduled to occur in 2019 and 2020. Staff is currently going through the public process for these projects. They will meet with business owners for feedback on the preferred alignment and shape of bridge. Commissioners viewed options of the bridge from the north and south sides of the track. The bridge, Mr. Manibog advised, must be 23' above the railroad track and ADA accessible.

Ms. Walsh asked members for comments and feedback on the three trail alternatives that were viewed. Mr. Manibog indicated that depending on which alternate is chosen, they will ensure bikes and pedestrians can be in the same place safely and mentioned Three Rivers Park District will be involved in the process also. Members discussed alternatives and pros and cons of each option. Each alternative has similar pricing. Commissioners viewed land ownership in the area and were advised some alternatives for the north side of the trail may need land acquisition. Commissioners favored the middle alignment where the bridge lands between Peter Hobart and the Dakota fields.

Mr. Manibog explained Connect the Park is a ten year initiative which began in 2015. The initiative began when residents requested more non-vehicle transportation options. The goal of the initiative is to have sidewalks, trails and bikeways close and convenient to residents.

Commissioners viewed the projects planned for 2019 which include a bridge on Louisiana Avenue over Minnehaha Creek. Currently going through the public process so they have 95% of plans completed. Staff is working with the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District for a trail under the bridge. Commissioner Hagemann recommended adding a public art component under the bridge to make aesthetically pleasing. Ms. Walsh inquired on how the southwest light rail project will affect the Louisiana Avenue bridge. Mr. Manibog advised the regional trail will be closed at the Hopkins Depot through north Cedar Lake Road. The trail will be detoured around Bass Lake Preserve, north on Belt Line Boulevard, over the pedestrian bridge over Highway 7 to Minnetonka Boulevard. Minnetonka Boulevard will be the main thoroughfare. Commuters would go to Aquila Park then turn onto the North Spur trail to get to Hopkins. The regional trail will be closed for approximately two years. Commissioner Cantor inquired if this would increase bike traffic on Minnetonka Boulevard to which Mr. Manibog advised they anticipate it would as Minnetonka Boulevard is the primary thoroughfare. Mr. West asked for data on how many users utilize the path that will be re-routed. Mr. Manibog indicated Three Rivers Park District would have that information. Commissioner Hagemann indicated commuters would feel more comfortable using Minnetonka Boulevard but feels recreational riders would utilize different way.

In 2019 – 2020 the plan includes the Dakota Park bridge and bikeway. Commissioner Hagemann advised an active living grant was received to assist in implementing visioning of the project.

Commission members and Mr. Manibog exchanged thanks.

b. Westwood Hills Nature Center

Mr. West advised at their November 19 meeting, the city council approved the bid packages and authorized staff to move forward with the Westwood Hills Nature Center project. Commissioners were thanked for reviewing the plans and their continual support. Removal of the trees will begin Thursday or Friday then contractors will return in April when the road restrictions are removed to begin on the building project. In the fall of 2019, we hope to move staff into the new building then demolish the old building. Completion of the project is set for spring of 2020. Individuals can text SLP WHNC to 468311 or visit the city's website for project updates.

Mr. West and Mr. Oestreich advised of access gates to the Nature Center building during the tree removal process (viewed postcard showing access) and during the construction. Gates 7 and 8 are closest to the interpretive center. Gate 7 has a staircase and gate 8 is a crushed rock surface. In 2019, they will have groups enter the main path located off of Franklin Avenue or one of those gates during main construction. Commissioner Cantor inquired if staff foresee any issues with summer camp. Staff met to determine the best area to hold programs and ensure accessibility advised Mr. Oestreich.

Mr. Oestreich indicated way-finding, or directional signs and interpretive signs will be included inside the building and outdoors at the Westwood Hills Nature Center. There will be 40 way-finding signs and 213 educational signs. Signs were written at an eighth grade level and all are designed for ADA accessibility. Currently the signs are at the fabrication state. Color-Ad received the contract for signage. Mr. West showed examples of way-finding signs. Some will include text or iconic pictures. Alicia Sojourner, the city's Racial Equity Manager, indicated it is recommended to print signage in American standardized English. Commissioners asked if it would be beneficial to have education signs in different languages. Ms. Sojourner advised when signs are created in various languages, there is an automatic assumption that people do not know how to read America English. Also, in St. Louis Park, outside of the English language, the most highly spoken languages are Somali, Oromo, Hmong and Vietnamese.

Another aspect is translation of oral languages can be problematic depending on what area the individual is from. As an example, Somali is an oral language. Translation can be done but may exclude certain aspects of the language and not translated to the fullest. When creating signs in various languages, would want someone near that also speaks the language when creating signage.

Mr. Oestreich explained there is an app that gains access to multiple languages. Split Rock Studios showed staff the app which scans text to convert it to different languages to be read or listened to. Staff will have iPads available for individuals to use at Westwood Hills Nature Center to translate and also for the visually impaired. Mr.

Oestreich demonstrated on an iPad the oral and written translation that is possible for the signage developed for Westwood Hills Nature Center. Several Commissioners then tried it and agreed it is affective. Commissioner Griffin feels it is nice for people to see different languages on signs. She feels like awareness is being lost by not having different languages on signage. Ms. Sojourner indicated we have many opportunities throughout facilities for families to access but we don't have the capacity to have staff on hand and feel do more of a disservice to not see all languages. Signage needs to be clear for navigation. Potentially, we could provide programs in different languages for individuals.

Commissioner Bushland inquired if this is the recommendation for any city facility. Ms. Sojourner indicated the city is looking at an app to use as a way finder for all city buildings. Ms. Walsh advised the notification systems through St. Louis Park are provided in different languages. Ms. Sojourner also advised a contract phone number is included as the city has a contract with a language line that assists in communicating in various languages. Commissioner Hagemann advised he used an app in France and it was 95% accurate with the language. Ms. Sojourner used an app with Arabic script and was spot on. Ms. Sojourner advised the app can also go English to English to help audio learners. Ms. Walsh inquired if headphones would also be available for use. Mr. Oestreich agreed it would be a good option and could check into disposable ones. With an iPod, data collection and tracking of languages being used can be collected, as well as if it's used for fun or learning.

It was moved by Commissioner Cantor, seconded by Commissioner Hagemann, to provide an appropriate number of portable devices, along with Information Technology support, to have available at Westwood Hills Nature Center for visitors use in translating signage, which will be in American Standardized English. Devices will only be used for this purpose. The motion passed 7 – 0.

Great River Greening will be working in the marsh on the south side of the lake in the winter to remove non-desirable plants and to replant, Mr. Oestreich indicated.

c. School District agreement

Ms. Walsh distributed a draft of a proposed agreement between the city and the school district relating to the use of facilities for programs. The school district pays for ice rented, otherwise there is no exchange of funds for the use of facilities. The city does pay for a building supervisor when using a school district facility.

The city is updating the agreement as the original agreement is from February 25, 1991 and includes information that is out of date. The proposed agreement conveys joint participation between the two organizations which include the creation of the Community Education Advisory Council ("CEAC") and school appointed members will be on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission ("PRAC"). Currently, the school

district does not have interaction with the members once appointed. The agreement proposes the school district appointed members be provided updates from the school district to share with the PRAC. Members of CEAC bring updates of the city back to CEAC. The proposed agreement references exchange of funds but prefer not to specify an exact amount and have the amount approved annually. Currently, the city pays Community Education \$187,400, of which \$37,752 is for community schools, \$14,800 for adult enrichment, \$22,948 for youth enrichment and \$111,900 for senior programs. The school district pays the city \$89,404 annually of which \$44,702 goes into organized recreation fun and \$44,702 is for the park improvement fund.

Commissioners reviewed the agreement and discussed various ideas. Commissioner Hagemann suggested incorporating allocation of the school district funds to bus students to Westwood Hills Nature Center for field trips. He asked if it would be appropriate to ask if some of that funding provided to the school district be used to assist with the cost of transportation for students to visit Westwood Hills Nature Center if the student cannot afford transportation. Commissioner Cantor inquired why the large allocation of funds for the senior programs. Ms. Walsh advised it is likely because the city does not provide programs for seniors; Community Education provides all the senior programs.

It was moved by Commissioner Hagemann, seconded by Commissioner May, to recommend the City Council approve the proposed agreement between the City of St. Louis Park and Independent School District 283 relating to the use of facilities for school district and city programs following the addition of a section pertaining to maintenance costs of new construction. The motion passed 7 – 0.

d. Commission sponsored appreciation luncheon recap

Commissioner Bushland commented all was good. Commissioners and staff discussed different appreciation options which included an ice cream social, holding the event in late August, etc. Will discuss further in 2019.

e. Election of Officials

It was moved by Commissioner Foulkes, seconded by Commissioner May to nominate Commissioner Bluma as Chair and Commissioner Cantor as Vice Chair. The motions passed 7 – 0.

5. Staff Communication

Ms. Shingles introduced herself and advised that her position consists of reserving The Rec Center, ROC and Westwood Hills Nature Center when complete, community engagement and youth sports. Community engagement is important to the city, which has a community engagement workgroup which Ms. Shingles co-leads. The workgroup talks with department

directors to learn what engagement is currently taking place in each department as they look to enhance the city's vision.

The workgroup reviews how each department engages with the community to help determine how the city can build social capital. The focus is to take opportunities to build relationships and have two-way conversations with the community. The group also discusses how racial equity fits. As an example, if hosting a public meeting, who is coming to the meeting, who is left out of the meeting and are the invitations all inclusive.

The group will bring together all city departments to share best practices and data, and review opportunities to reach more people (i.e. shared meetings). Commissioner Bushland advised the City of Edina is hiring a full-time community engagement coordinator. Ms. Shingles indicated participants of the group rotate so it obtains diversity in styles and thinking. The city currently in the hiring process for one community organizer that will engage with the community and help unite city staff engagement efforts. The community organizer must speak different languages. Ms. Walsh indicated this will help us learn programs that individuals would like to see that we do not currently offer.

The city has a community engagement vehicle which can be used to take public meetings or recreation into the community, indicated Ms. Shingles. The goal is to get more information to more people so they are in the know.

Ms. Shingles advised three play structures will be replaced in 2019. The structure at Cedar Manor Park will be a joint project with the school district, be barrier free and installed around July 15. Sunshine Park will get a new structure in June and Willow Park will get theirs July 15. Staff will send communication to residents around the park areas inviting them to attend a meeting to vote on which playground structure they'd like in their neighborhood park. Playground selections will then be brought before the Commission for review.

Mr. West shared information on "Walk the Park" which is a free, monthly walking program. Participants walk in parks during the spring and summer months; in the winter, they walk the halls of schools. Generally, the walk is one to two miles each time.

The annual U.G.L.Y. Sweater Dash will be held Sunday, December 9 beginning at 5:30 p.m. at Louisiana Oaks Park. The 5K is a family-friendly run and participants receive a goodie bag and race medal.

Ms. Walsh advised the city council held the truth and taxation discussion at the December 3 council meeting. Individuals like the services received but not the amount of taxes they pay; some were happy to pay for good service provided. Staff realized more education needs to take place on taxes as they mainly rise due to evaluation of property. Commissioner Hagemann suggested using an example to residents to help them understand.

At the December 17 city council meeting, the council will approve the budget and CIP. The capital improvement projects can then begin in January. One of the big projects slated for 2019 are the tennis courts by City Hall. The courts will be reconstructed and pickle ball courts added.

6. Member Communication

Commissioner Griffin advised the Dakota dog park people are very happy with wind shield added.

Commissioner Foulkes congratulated Commissioners Bluma and Cantor on their elections.

Commissioner Hagemann advised the Engineering Department has a bike to work day and the Parks Division hosts a bike event in a park, both held in the month of May which is bike month. Would staff consider reaching out to engineering and collaborate one event? Three Rivers may also be interested in collaborating to offer bike education services at the event. The event could be similar to Walk in the Park, a family friendly event that is advertised in the Parks & Rec brochure. Members discussed and agreed.

7. Other/ Future Agenda Items

Next Meeting – January 16, 2019.

8. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Foulkes, seconded by Commissioner Bushland, to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m. The motion passed 7 – 0.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy M. Voelker
Recording Secretary