

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rich Bluma, Tiffany Bushland, Bruce Cantor (6:15 p.m.), George Hagemann, Pete May and Rachel Salzer.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** George Foulkes and Elizabeth Griffin.

**GUEST PRESENT:** Paul Bierhaus, Kids Around the World

**STAFF PRESENT:** Jacquelyn Kramer, Associate Planner, Shawn Rice, Parks Field Supervisor, Cindy Walsh, Director of Operations and Recreation, Jim Vaughan, Natural Resource Coordinator and Stacy Voelker, Recording Secretary

**1. Call to order**

Commissioner Bluma called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**2. Presentation**

Ms. Walsh introduced Mr. Bierhaus and Mr. Rice then described the collaboration between Kids Around the World and the city. Mr. Bierhaus advised the “Kids Around the World” organization is based out of Rockford, Illinois and has been around since 1995. The organization has built over 1,800 playgrounds around the world. The program is environmentally friendly and saves the cities money by taking down the equipment as well as reducing waste. The playgrounds are repurposed for kids in other countries that may not have any type of play equipment.

In the Twin Cities area, 113 playgrounds have been taken down (13 from St. Louis Park) and relocate to other countries Mr. Bierhaus advised. Playgrounds have also come from the cities of Plymouth, Elk River, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, Brooklyn Park, Eagan and Woodbury.

The organization evaluates the used playground to determine if it can be reinstalled as some have unique parts that cannot be reused. Volunteers (generally retired individuals), along with city staff, remove the old playgrounds, mainly in April with an average of 10 per year.

Mr. Bierhaus advised that once the playgrounds are uninstalled, they are sent to Chicago’s 80,000-foot warehouse. The playgrounds are then shrink wrapped and sent to the new location in a 40-foot container via boat. In some instances, the shipping container is left in the country and turned into usable space (i.e. recreation center).

Once the playgrounds are onsite, volunteers pay their own way to the installation location to install, Mr. Bierhaus advised. They can build a large playground in approximately four days. If they had more volunteers, they could do more. Mr. Bierhaus has traveled to six continents to install playgrounds. It's a fun and great thing to do!

Commissioners viewed pictures of Kyrgyzstan (by Siberia). The pictures were of Lenin Park, of what they previously had and showed the new playground being installed. Commissioners also viewed pictures of the previous Peter Hobart playground which became the first playground installed in Uganda. Building of the playgrounds builds connections between ethnicities, Mr. Bierhaus explained. The first playground was built in Ukraine. Many of the kids watched the installation as they were curious as to what was being built. Some playgrounds are installed in orphanages or where kids have never seen a playground.

Ms. Bushland inquired if it's legal for the playgrounds to be used in other countries. Ms. Walsh indicated the used playgrounds cannot be used in America due to safety standards but can be used in other countries as they do not have the same laws. Kids Around the World fixes up the playgrounds before installing them and also provides indemnification on where the playgrounds are installed.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Bierhaus for his work with Kids Around the World.

Ms. Walsh advised that this program is consistent with one of our five Strategic Priorities; St. Louis Park is committed to being a leader in environmental stewardship.

### **3. Approval of minutes**

#### **a. December 4, 2018**

*It was moved by Commissioner Bushland, seconded by Commissioner Cantor to approve the minutes of December 4, 2018. The motion passed 6–0.*

### **4. Business**

#### **a. Park and trail dedication for Luxe Residential**

Jacquelyn Kramer, Associate Planner for the Community Development Department, introduced herself to the Commission. Ms. Kramer explained Luxe Residential will be installed at 5235 Wayzata Boulevard, where Olive Garden currently resides. Luxe Residential is proposing 339,497 square-foot apartment building with 207 dwellings. The land will be rezoned for the apartment building. Luxe Residential will add a pocket park on their site which can be utilized by the public but will be maintained by the developer.

Since no parks are designated in that area, staff recommends cash-in-lieu of land. The estimated fees would be as follows:

Park Dedication:     \$ 310,500  
Trail Dedication:     \$ 46,575

Ms. Walsh advised the dedication money goes into the Park Improvement Fund which is used for new playground equipment, park renovations, etc. She commended the Community Development Department on negotiating amenities for their residents.

***It was moved by Commissioner Hagemann, seconded by Commissioner Cantor, to accept cash-in-lieu of land for Luxe Residential, 5235 Wayzata Boulevard at a fee of \$310,500 for Park Dedication and \$46,575 for Trail Dedication. The motion passed 6–0.***

Thanks were traded between Ms. Kramer and the Commissioners.

**b. Annual meeting with City Council, February 25, 2019**

Ms. Walsh invited the Commissioners to attend the annual Boards and Commission meeting with the city council to be held on Monday, February 25. Each Board and Commission will provide an overview of their Commission and state their goals for 2019. The meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. with presentations starting at 6:15 p.m. An invitation will also be sent to each Commissioner via email.

**c. Discuss 2019 work plan**

Ms. Walsh and Ms. Bushland drafted and distributed ideas for the Commission's 2019 work plan.

The following work plan ideas were reviewed and discussed with members:

- Pickleball: review and recommend policy for use of the new pickleball courts to be constructed in 2019. Staff will invite a guest to an upcoming meeting to discuss.
- Youth Associations: inform Youth Associations and other community groups who present to the Commission that one of the city's five strategic initiatives has to do with Racial Equity and Inclusion.
- Bylaws: the city council is asking all Boards and Commissions to review and update their bylaws as seem fit. This will be on a future agenda for the Commission to discuss.
- Scholarship guidelines: Ms. Shingles is researching other community's guidelines for guidance to update ours. The Commission will be asked to review and provide a recommendation for new scholarship guidelines. Commissioner Cantor asked where the scholarship funds come from to which Ms. Walsh advised

occasionally donations are received but generally the money comes from the general fund. Staff's goals are to increase awareness that we accept donations for the scholarship program and to assist those in need.

- Westwood Hills Nature Center project: staff will provide monthly updates when the project begins. Commissioners are invited to partake in the 2020 Arbor Day event which will be held at Westwood Hills Nature Center.
- Minnehaha Creek Clean-Up: Commissioners were asked if they'd like to continue the event to which they accepted.
- Evergreen Award: staff encouraged Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission representation on the voting committee for the award.

Commissioners were asked to connect with Ms. Walsh with any additional comments or recommendations.

**d. Buckthorn removal program**

Mr. Vaughan, Natural Resource Coordinator, provided Commissioners with a map and buckthorn management priority ranking which includes eradication, control and low priority parks. Staff will remove as much buckthorn as possible. Buckthorn removal is managed this year by Prairie Restorations, who will be doing removal in four parks: Roxbury, Keystone, Browndale and Kilmer Pond. The visual aspect will be a big change and residents in the surrounding areas have been notified of the removal via postcards.

Ms. Walsh explained that people view buckthorn as a hedge plant and some do not want it removed or understand it is not desirable. Mr. Vaughan explained that once the buckthorn is removed, native plants are then free to grow. This has been done in Westwood Hills Nature Center for the past three years, in collaboration with Great River Greening, and good regeneration has occurred once the buckthorn is removed. Staff or a contractor will return annually to maintain control of certain areas and spot treat stumps. The intent is to choose a few parks each year to remove buckthorn while maintaining control over those already addressed. The low priority parks listed have more intensive buckthorn as it is very thick in areas.

Mr. Vaughan indicated some neighborhood groups contact staff directly to do their own eradication of buckthorn. Commissioner Hagemann inquired how far seeds distribute to which Mr. Vaughan indicated seeds can go several blocks via birds.

Mr. Vaughan indicated the city offers a residential drop-off site for buckthorn to promote the removal on private property.

Commissioner May inquired on the area by Isaac Walton Creekside Park. Mr. Vaughan indicated buckthorn is extensively being removed by Great River Greening so there is minimal remaining at that location.

## 5. Staff communication

Mr. Vaughan distributed a map showing the areas injection of insecticide has been done in ash trees for the past three years. Ash trees are wind pollinators. Neonicotinoide is the insecticide harmful to pollinators (i.e. bees) as it contaminates their hives, causing reproduction issues in the hive. As part of the “Bee Friendly” initiative, the city does not use Neonicotinoides but uses other chemicals, proven not to be harmful to pollinators. Rainbow Tree Care has been the contractor used for tree injections for the past three years. The city also offers a discount program to residents, which accounts for approximately 400 private trees being injected. This provides good, overall protection of ash trees in St. Louis Park. The injections are good for three years with a goal of injecting 500-600 trees this year. Trees provide numerous benefits at 20” in diameter, which has been the focus of injection. Emerald Ash Borer has not been found in St. Louis Park as the city continues to remove unhealthy ash trees. The city also continues to diversify tree plantings throughout the city.

Mr. Vaughan advised all trees on boulevards, regardless of size are pruned. A map of tree pruning in the city, which includes approximately 19,000 boulevard trees, was reviewed with Commissioners and goals were stated. Park maintenance staff prunes park trees when time allows, as well as S & S Tree and Horticultural, Inc., who was hired to prune. The Birchwood neighborhood was just finished and S & S is currently working in the Bronx Neighborhood. Each neighborhood is on a nine year pruning rotation.

Ms. Walsh asked Mr. Rice for park tree rotation information. Mr. Rice reviewed the list of high priority parks and indicated the task is weather dependent. This year has been phenomenal for trimming due to the cold weather and low snow cover (easier to access trees). Park maintenance staff works on pruning from the ground where S & S prunes higher by utilizing their larger equipment.

Mr. Vaughan encouraged Commissioners to attend the following events:

- Minnehaha Creek clean-up: Saturday, April 27, 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. at Creekside Park. Ms. Walsh asked Commissioners to encourage groups to volunteer and to advise Mr. Vaughan of the group name and anticipated number of people attending.
- Arbor Day: Saturday, May 11, 9 a.m. – noon at Aquila Park to plant approximately 70 trees. Volunteers can sign-up through treetrust.org or contact Mr. Vaughan.
- Westwood Hills Nature Center tree planting: Tuesday, May 21, 4 – 7 p.m. to plant 150 trees which is part of the tree preservation plan with the new building. Tree Trust will assist and trees will be planted in the northwest corner of nature center.

Mr. Vaughan indicated these dates will also be advertised in the Parks and Recreation brochure and on the city’s website.

The Evergreen Award has been offered since 1990 and nominations are accepted through August 1, Mr. Vaughan advised. Anyone can nominate a highly visible resident, apartment/condo campus or business for the award. Emails nominating an address can be sent directly to Mr. Vaughan. Mr. Vaughan will email Commissioners the date and time judging will take place in the event they would like to assist. Once the winner(s) have been decided, it will be brought before the city council in mid-September.

Commissioner Hagemann suggested there should be two awards – one general and another for specific designs such as Bee Friendly. Mr. Vaughan agreed and will get the word out of the two categories. Ms. Walsh suggested advising the inspectors also so they know the categories upon nomination.

Commissioners thanked Mr. Vaughan for the information provided.

Ms. Walsh showed Commissioners the facility reservation folder created. Commissioners were impressed with the new marketing tool.

The Gopher men's hockey team practiced at the ROC Monday evening and was a great turnout, advised Ms. Walsh. Commissioner Ms. Salzer was present and indicated a lot of kids attended. She recommended hosting the event again. Commissioner Cantor attended and indicated it was nice to see the Gophers skating with the open skaters, signing autographs, etc. He also noticed individuals wearing other city hockey gear so know the word got out to other communities. Ms. Walsh indicated staff's goal is to reach out to other college hockey programs with hopes of hosting future practices or games. Eric Perkins from Kare 11 was present and was very complimentary of the facility. This was a great marketing event to show off the ROC!

Commissioners commented that the Minnesota Wild practice at the ROC and was again a great event with many people in attendance.

## **6. Member communication**

None.

## **7. Other / future agenda items**

Next Meetings:

Wednesday, February 20: Canceled due to lack of agenda items.

Monday, February 25: Meeting with City Council.

Wednesdays, March 20, April 17, May 15, August 21, September 18 and December 4.

**8. Adjournment**

*It was moved by Commissioner Hagemann, seconded by Commissioner Cantor to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 p.m. The motion passed 6–0.*

Respectfully submitted,

*Stacy M. Voelker*  
Recording Secretary