The meeting convened at 6:30 p.m.

Councilmembers present: Mayor Pro Tem Anne Mavity, Tim Brausen, Rachel Harris, Larry Kraft, and Margaret Rog.

Councilmembers absent: Mayor Jake Spano and Nadia Mohamed

Staff present: City Manager (Mr. Harmening), Director of Operations and Recreation (Ms. Walsh), Engineering Director (Ms. Heiser), Director of Community Development (Ms. Barton), Planning/Zoning Supervisor (Ms. McMonigal), Housing Supervisor (Ms. Schnitker), Assistant Housing Supervisor (Ms. Olson), Wellness and Volunteer Coordinator (Ms. Smith), Police Chief Harcey, Communications Manager (Ms. Smith), Senior Management Analyst (Ms. Solano), and Recording Secretary (Ms. Pappas).

Guests: Bruce Cantor, Chair, Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission; Amanda Hane, Melanie Ferris, Sera Kinoglu with Wilder research staff; Julie Rappaport & Ariel Steinman, Victoria Martinez, Zoe Frank, Christy Bergeson with SEEDS.

1. **Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission 2020 annual work plan**

Bruce Cantor, Parks and Recreation Commission chair, provided an update on the commission’s annual work plan for 2020. He noted seven initiatives identified for 2020 which are included in the council packet. Mr. Cantor commented on Access to Fun scholarships for youth, which are available so they can participate in activities, if needed.

Councilmember Brausen asked if the scholarships are being publicized to youth, and in a variety of languages. Mr. Cantor stated yes.

Councilmember Rog asked about access to the scholarship fund and sources. Mr. Cantor stated the funds are made up of the commission’s budget, grant monies from the community foundation, as well as donations.

Commissioner Cantor mentioned the planning process to redevelop Webster Park. Ms. Walsh added open meetings are being held to engage the public, and a task force will also be developed. She added the council will be kept posted on developments.

Councilmember Harris asked if the nature center has plans to add back the archery field that was removed during construction. Ms. Walsh stated the commission will continue to look at this, but there are no plans currently as there is no longer an open field at the nature center to accommodate this use.

Councilmember Brausen asked which city playgrounds will be upgraded this year. Mr. Cantor stated Texatonka, Pennsylvania, and Edgewood.
Councilmember Kraft was happy to see a youth member on the commission and encouraged Mr. Cantor to have two youth members, if possible. Councilmember Kraft asked what is working well and what could work better.

Mr. Cantor stated the meetings are going well and are productive, as are the youth sports leagues and parks which come to talk to the commission regularly. He added city staff does a great job keeping the commission informed as well. Mr. Cantor stated the commission could look at expanding the number of people on the commission, as an item to work on.

Councilmember Kraft asked if Mr. Cantor felt the commission needed more council-initiated programs or information, or if they wanted to spend more time with the council. Mr. Cantor stated the commission worked very closely with the council on the nature center construction and are happy to come more often to talk about parks and recreation.

Councilmember Rog asked if the commission is working on projects through a racial equity lens. Mr. Cantor stated yes, especially with the scholarships program and making sure all funds are equally distributed throughout the community.

Councilmember Rog noted the Jr. Naturalist program is mostly all white youth. She encouraged the commission to find ways of making the program accessible to all youth. Mr. Cantor agreed adding if the council has ways to help with that, to please be in touch with him.

2. **Crime/drug-free rental housing workgroup recommendations**

Ms. Schnitker gave background and history on the work of this workgroup and their recommendations.

Chief Harcey gave an overview of the current crime-free, drug free ordinance.

Ms. Olson gave an overview of the two options being recommended by the workgroup, all of which is in the staff report. She stated option A modified the current ordinance, while option B repeals the current ordinance. Ms. Olson stated the majority of the workgroup supports option B.

Ms. Schnitker thanked the workgroup for their input and time spent on this issue, adding this item is scheduled to come back to the council at the March 23 meeting.

Councilmember Harris asked about the origin of the ordinance, the benefits that were sought when creating it, and what metrics are in place that demonstrate the intentions of it, or is the city focusing on the metrics of reported crimes and outcomes of the ordinance.

Councilmember Harris also asked about the experience of property owners and their perspective, and how the city measures quality of life for those impacted by someone in their building who caused a disturbance. She asked if there is anything in the comp plan that links to this ordinance, what is the smallest rental unit the ordinance applies to, and if it would apply to the future Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) policy. She asked for clarification on all of these issues.
Councilmember Kraft asked about the data as well, how many appeals have been filed, and also how many evictions have occurred. He added there are also other areas of the law that address this issue and asked what and where they are.

Councilmember Rog also asked about ADUs, condos, additional properties that might not be getting attention here, and if there is an ordinance related to homeowners as well. She asked for information on similar ordinances in other cities, for comparison.

Councilmember Brausen asked about data and that it be included in the next report. He is interested in knowing if the city has been able to identify owners with problem properties, or how many property owners consistently have problems.

Mayor Pro Tem Mavity agreed, adding it would be helpful to have the website include links to all of the previous information that was provided to the council on this topic since 2008, including meeting minutes, so all the history is in one place. She asked if there is any data in the region or nationally that shows comparable cities that have this type of ordinance.

3. **Food Access and insecurity study**

Ms. McMonigal introduced Ms. Smith, city wellness volunteer coordinator, and the research staff from Wilder: Amanda Hane, Melanie Ferris, and Sera Kinoglu.

The Wilder staff presented a summary of the food access and insecurity study undertaken by Wilder Research for the city. The study looked at to what extent residents experience food insecurity or lack access to food, what resources and services are available; what are gaps in access and what could the city’s role be in addressing the issue.

The Wilder researchers stated while it is difficult to estimate the number of residents who experience food insecurity, survey data from other agencies shows between 6-12% of the population may experience food access or insecurity issues. Other findings include:

- Food insecurity can be a hidden issue
- Those most at risk are lower-income households, children, older adults and immigrants.
- Barriers to obtaining food include transportation, housing costs and financial instability, lack of knowledge of resources and stigma that deters people from seeking help.

The Wilder researchers also noted what the city is currently doing:

- Annual financial support of STEP
- Five farmers markets will be piloted in 2020
- Five community gardens
- Healthy Living Grant
- Twin Cities mobile market
- Working with metro transit on additional bus service and improvement of north/south routes after SWLRT is open
- Community Link
Ms. McMonigal stated that staff recommends establishing a cross sector task force to review barriers identified in the report and determine next steps.

Councilmember Harris asked about the food desert, and how would folks get to the grocery store if they have no transportation. Ms. Hane stated rides with friends might be an option and expansion of transit within the city as well.

Councilmember Harris stated she is open to the task force but asked what the objectives of the task force are, and next steps.

Councilmember Rog thanked Ms. Rappaport for elevating this issue within the city. She said STEP services are vital to the city and noted a quick assistance would be to increase the city’s financial support of STEP. She added the SEEDS group is another wonderful resource that can be looked at. She asked that convenience stores not be called grocery stores and added that transportation is a major barrier to food and schools, while lack of sidewalks is also an issue that needs to be payed close attention to. She is in support of the task force, and funding for STEP and SEEDS.

Councilmember Brausen stated it is important the city be involved and take a leadership role in this issue. He supports the task force adding that transportation is definitely a significant issue, which ties in with mass transit, and how people access the last mile. He stated other cities have contracts with Uber, which might be something St. Louis Park can look into.

Councilmember Kraft asked the Wilder researchers what they think the role of the city should be. He asked what best practices they have seen in other cities, adding he expected more analysis from the consultants as to where to get the biggest bang for the buck.

Ms. Ferris stated that is fair criticism, noting cities look into policies that support convenience stores and also help food shelves provide fresh product. She said it is work in partnerships with grocery stores, farmers markets, and ongoing engagement with partners.

Councilmember Kraft stated he is not certain what he thinks of a task force at this time and needs more specific goals around it, adding it seems unfocused currently.

Ms. McMonigal explained further that the task force would be of limited duration and would take up the issues noted in the report and determine how they could be addressed by the various agencies involved in the issue. The task force would include the key informants from the study as well as those affected by food insecurity.

Mayor Pro Tem Mavity thanked the Wilder researchers for the report, stating this was an eye opener. She agreed with Councilmembers Kraft and Harris about getting more information on the objectives of the task force, before agreeing to it. She added there will need to be more focus and parameters as well as budgeting in order to hire extra staff. She stated she is willing to move forward if there is clarity on outcomes first.

Ms. McMonigal stated staff will convene the task force and make recommendations to the council.
4. **SLP SEEDS request for city funding**

Ariel Steinman, operations director for SEEDS presented the report, and introduced SEEDS interns Victoria Martinez, a senior at St Louis Park high school, Zoe Frank, a junior at the high school, and a member of the Environmental and Sustainability Commission. They noted their mission, goals and stated they host 3 major community events each year, as well as provide urban agriculture internships.

She noted SEEDS has two requests of the city, with staff time and funding for several items:
- support to create a food council and food action plan
- sponsorship of a tiny mobile farm equaling $425,000 over a 4-year period

Councilmember Mohamed sent a note of support, stating food security is important and needs to be addressed. She noted her family were refugees and were not able to put food on the table, but did have help from STEP, however, it was not enough. She stated many adults feel shame about this, and stated she is in support of the requests SEEDS is making.

Mayor Pro Tem Mavity stated these are substantial asks and the council needs more detail from staff. Ms. McMonigal stated the request had recently changed and staff does not have the most current information included in the report to council.

Ms. Barton also noted these request tie into the food security study, and possibly the food security task force would need to be formed first, with the needs of the community reviewed before the council decides where to put funding.

Ms. Rappaport, founder of St. Louis Park SEEDS, noted they have many partners in the city and county, and the U of M capstone project members are helping SEEDS put much of this program together, mobilize partners, and make recommendations.

Tyler Foley of the U of M capstone team stated they are proposing various recommendations to SEEDS to help them with promotion of their projects, community visioning and best practices.

Councilmember Kraft stated he is impressed with this project and noted there are many intersections here with food, climate, equity, and learning. He added he is very supportive of the work SEEDS is doing but he needs more clarity around the investment being asked of the council.

Ms. Rappaport stated with the funding, there will be training of 1-2 volunteers to learn how to mobilize their neighborhoods, become leaders in the community, train on food system change and how to eliminate hunger.

Councilmember Harris thanked Ms. Rappaport for her work here, but stated she is still not clear what the council is being asked for with the $425,000 grant. She added going forward, it would be helpful as requests are made of council, that there is alignment between SEEDS and the staff report, noting there is a disconnect now.
Councilmember Harris stated she is supportive of SEEDS’ efforts in the community and sees the efforts at Oak Park Village, which have been impactful. She is optimistic for a future ask, and suggested SEEDS look at the business plan of the Nest and use it as an example for their funding requests.

Councilmember Brausen stated he supports these efforts and has been engaged with SEEDS since their beginning. He pointed to the formation of a task force, which could begin discussions on an equity food plan. He stated it is premature for the council to commit to funding especially since the task force will be asked to make recommendations to the council.

Councilmember Rog stated she empathizes with SEEDS, adding their outcomes have been good and they have built many gardens, and created many classes in the community. However, she would need to see outcomes that the council could understand, along with SEEDS’ goals. She added she is ready to provide modest financial support.

Councilmember Brausen agreed and added he would like to see the city align around the school board related to food issues and will bring this up at the next joint council/school board meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Mavity thanked Ms. Rappaport for her efforts in the community on this issue, asked staff to clarify the different roles, partners, and different ways the council supports them. She asked that this request be added to the work of the task force outline and objectives.

Mayor Pro Tem Mavity added the city has several organizations they provide funding for, and this will need to be reviewed during the budgeting process. She also noted she is very aware of the extraordinary effort it takes to write these grants, report against them, and manage the reporting, adding she wants staff to be clear and would want to see additional funding in order to support all efforts.

Councilmember Rog stated she would be comfortable providing a small grant similar to those the city provides to other non-profits and adding it to other grants already funded. She asked that SEEDS clearly state the amount requested, who would benefit and identify outcomes in the request.

5. Dakota north bikeway and bridge project no. 4019-2000

Mr. Sullivan presented the report. He noted the following items to be reviewed by council and decisions made on how to proceed:

- Competitive bidding climate
- Extending construction schedule into late summer 2020 with fall/winter 2021 completion
- Recommendation is to not include the north staircase in the project as it is now over budget.
- Art for the bridge includes steel structure with a challenging and complex installation, a stamped decorative concrete area and an art wall on the north side of the bridge.
Mr. Sullivan stated the overall project estimate is $9.089 million, with $2.91 million in federal funding. He added the reason this must come to council as soon as possible for decision is that the federal process timeframe is limited and there will need to be final approval to go out for bid before the end of June.

Councilmember Rog stated she feels strongly about keeping the stairs as it is in line with the comp plan to prioritize pedestrians. She recommends keeping the stairs for pedestrians. She added she has safety concerns related to the steel art but would approve the other two pieces of art on the project.

Councilmember Harris asked if one staircase would be enough. She added this project has had incremental increases over time, soil instability, land acquisition issues, and she has been supportive of the bridge as the city has few north/south routes. However, now she feels this cost is an overrun. She asked if the council will be committed to the same investment on the Louisiana Avenue corridor, and is the city using their resources wisely.

Ms. Heiser stated there are potential additional projects for Connect the Park on Louisiana Avenue, but a traffic study will need to be conducted first. She added there is a budget for Louisiana Avenue to have a similar design to Cedar Lake Road.

Councilmember Brausen stated Ward 4 is asking when the bridge will be built. He stated the city received federal funding for this project and he wants to see this happen, adding it fits in with the city’s Connect the Park program. He is supportive of paying for it with the increased costs and supports the north staircase also. He noted this project helps build city infrastructure, which will last over 50 years, and he is in favor of this and the public art.

Councilmember Kraft stated he prefers the public art be more about who the community is and questioned the steel beam sculpture and the costs. He stated he approves of the stairs.

Mayor Pro Tem Mavity referenced comments from Mayor Spano indicating costs are concerning, and he would like to delay construction and re-evaluate the art, stating in order to pay for the art, modifications to the bridge will need to be made. Mayor Spano had indicated that the city can do better in how they deal with the soil testing as well, so as to keep costs to a minimum.

Councilmember Harris stated the art is fine, but she would be all right with eliminating the steel beam art structure to save costs. She approves of the staircase but is not pleased with the cost of it. She would like staff to review the shadows cast there along with looking at the city clearing the snow and ice on the sidewalk below the stairs, if needed.

Mayor Pro Tem Mavity added she also has concerns on the cost overruns and would support removing the art steel beam sculpture both for cost and appearance, adding she does not support that. She is inclined to not support the stairs either because of the issue with iciness and is concerned for bikers there. She noted the stairs could be removed now and added later.

It was the consensus of the council to move forward with the project, but reconsider the steel beam art portion, and keep the other two public art projects in.
6. Future study session agenda planning and prioritization

Mr. Harmening asked if more time is needed for the crime free ordinance discussion on March 23. Mayor Pro Tem Mavity stated yes. Mr. Harmening added the workgroup will be available to answer questions of the council also.

The April 27 discussion on Connect the Park will be changed to a different date, so all councilmembers are able to attend.

Councilmember Harris asked what next steps on speed limits in the city are. Ms. Heiser stated speed limits are currently being studied and there have been many requests for changes. She stated this issue will come to council later for citywide speed limits, and capital requests for more signage, education, and outreach.

Councilmember Rog asked about the TIF request for Quentin Avenue.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Written Reports provided and documented for recording purposes only:

7. Body worn camera annual update
8. Application for tax increment financing assistant – The Quentin (formerly Cedar Place)
9. Mobility sharing update
10. Accessory dwelling units
11. Speed limit update

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Melissa Kennedy, city clerk                  Jake Spano, mayor