MEMBERS PRESENT: Rich Bluma, Bruce Cantor, George Foulkes, Elizabeth Griffin, George Hagemann, Leah Hollingsworth and Dahlia Krebs.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Pete May.

STAFF PRESENT: Jason Eisold, Rec Center Manager, Jennifer Monson, Senior Planner, Mark Oestreich, Westwood Hills Nature Center Manager, Cindy Walsh, Director of Operations and Recreation, Jason West, Recreation Superintendent and Stacy Voelker, Recording Secretary

1. Call to order

Commissioner Hollingsworth, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. Presentation

None.

3. Approval of minutes – January 14, 2020

It was moved by Commissioner Hagemann, seconded by Commissioner Bluma, to approve the meeting minutes of January 14, 2020 as presented. The motion passed 7–0.

4. Approval of agenda

It was moved by Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Hagemann, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed 7–0.

5. Business

a. Park and trail dedication – Xchange Medical Office Building

Jennifer Monson, Senior Planner, presented a proposal from The Davis Group to redevelop the site at 6009 Wayzata Boulevard with a new 77,500-square-foot, three-story medical office building (“Xchange Medical Office”) to the Commission. The Commission viewed the proposed site plan and learned the preliminary and final plat application includes combining four parcels into one, removing more than 400 cubic
yards of fill, a variance of 25 parking spaces, and a right-of-way vacation of a portion of 14th Street. Ms. Monson described accesses to the building, sidewalks and dedicated right-of-way for bike lanes in the future. The proposal includes a healing garden and additional seating areas plus an enhanced bus stop (heating in winter via solar panels). The Comprehensive Plan does not recommend additional parks in this area; thus staff recommends $20,603.99 park dedication fee in lieu of park land.

*It was moved by Commissioner Griffin, seconded by Commissioner Hollingsworth to accept cash-in-lieu of land in the amount of $20,603.99. The motion passed 7-0.*

b. **Evergreen Award volunteers**

Ms. Walsh indicated the Evergreen Award is based on nominations for beautiful landscaping. A great deal of nominations were received this year and would like one or two commissioners to assist in the process of selecting a winner. Visiting nominated properties begin mid-August as the landscaping looks best this time of year. After visiting the nominated properties, the volunteers discuss and select a winner.

Commissioner Hollingsworth and Griffin volunteered. The Commissioners names and contact information will be provided to Jim Vaughan, Natural Resources Coordinator.

c. **Adaptations to programs and facilities due to COVID-19**

Jason West, Recreation Superintendent, indicated adjustments were made to programs and facility usage due to COVID-19. Many summer programs were canceled, while others were offered virtually.

Registration for youth programs is lower than usual due to the pandemic. Mr. West advised registration is normal for adult softball, but lower for other adult sports and football was not offered due to restrictions.

The summer playground program was revised to ensure capacities were not exceeded and allow for social distancing. Participants registered on a weekly basis for the morning or afternoon sessions. Most weeks are at capacity and the program is going well.

Due to CDC recommendations, the Oak Hill Park Splash Pad has been limited to 75 patrons at one time. A staff person is present when it is open to ensure capacity is at or below. The capacity has been reached multiple times on hot days. So far have had approximately 10,000 visitors, which is comparable to past years.

The outdoor concert series has had a great turnout! Some concerts were canceled, if a large crowd was anticipated, as it is our intent to have small crowds. Staff encourages
wearing masks and social distancing. Masks are available for those without. People have spread throughout the park to enjoy the music.

Kids’ concerts have an average of 50-100 people in attendance, which is similar to past years. Open Mic Night is also similar to past years with an average of 30-70 people.

Commissioner Hollingsworth inquired if the summer playground program could be a full day as well to assist with daycare. Mr. West indicated participants can attend morning (9 a.m. – noon) and afternoon (1 – 4 p.m.) programs in the same week and register for numerous weeks. Staff also offered a full day program at Wolfe Park called Wolfe’s Den. Commissioner Hollingsworth suggested offering a program beginning in mid-May for full weekdays to assist with daycare issues. Mr. West will bring the idea to the programmers for next year.

d. Aquatic Park entrance project update

Jason Eisold, Rec Center Manager, advised there has been 10 - 15% more ice rented this year than normal years as other ice arenas didn’t open or were extremely restrictive. The Rec Center opened as soon as it could, with restrictions in place. Ice is rented solid from 6 a.m. – 10 p.m. daily. Tournaments have begun, eight out of ten weekends, through October. Revenue is higher than forecasted and ice is going well.

The Aquatic Park opened July 1 at 50% capacity, which is 600 patrons or less at one time. In July, 15,000 individuals visited the Aquatic Park which is slightly down from the average of 23,000 in a normal year. Numerous non-residents utilized the facility as no other pools in the area opened. The Aquatic Park will close August 26 for the season.

The new outdoor Aquatic Park entrance was scheduled to open when the Aquatic Park opened, but due to COVID-19, there were delays. Staff worked through the delays, and successfully utilized the entrance when ready. Mr. Eisold advised a $100,000 grant has been received to assist with funding the project, which is near completion.

Mr. Eisold indicated the ROC has gained a lot of interest for events, being an outdoor facility. Event capacity in the ROC, as well as all other facilities, has been reduced according to the CDC guidelines. Ice will be installed on the ROC in early October.

Commissioner Cantor inquired how staff keeps patrons safe during tournaments. Mr. Eisold advised staff works closely with MIAMA and the state on safety protocols. The protocols include users wear masks when entering the building, number of players on the ice is restricted, capacity and seating of spectators in restricted and cleaning / sanitizing spaces after each use. Users are aware of expectations and staff enforcement are vital. Each arena has different rules / policies, so some confusion comes into play.
Staff reminds users of expectations. Ms. Walsh commended Mr. Eisold and staff on an outstanding job monitoring and enforcing restrictions.

Ms. Walsh advised ice rental is bringing in $85,000 - $87,000 monthly in revenue. From a city-wide perspective, ice rental has greatly helped from a financial perspective. Throughout this transition, the City Manager has provided great support.

e. **Westwood Hills Nature Center update**

Mark Oestreich, Westwood Hills Nature Center Manager, advise the new building opened to the public on July 6 when summer camps began. The parking lot is complete, so all parking is off the street. The solar panels, which are located on the top of the building, went live approximately two weeks ago. Sundial Solar read the panels are providing 85 kilowatt hours. The building is using ten and the rest is sent back to the grid (as of Thursday).

Staff is working with the General Contractor on punch list items. Commissioners viewed photographs from the deconstruction of the old building. Valuable and reusable items were removed from the building before the building was demolished and area graded.

Emily Lavalier’s high-density art piece, located in the hallway leading into the Oak Room, was shown to members. Commissioner Hagemann inquired on the status of the other artwork slated for the building. Mr. West advised the St. Louis Park Rotary is now under contract and Chris Tully’s artwork for the 18’ wall is in process. The artist had issues with the kiln but is working through those.

The new building has people counters at the doors, Mr. Oestreich explained, that provide the data to a website so staff can analyze traffic flow. This is a free software program for the city to use as a pilot site.

Commissioner Hollingsworth inquired when the playground structure will be installed to which Mr. Oestreich indicated it will be installed by June of 2021 to receive DNR funding.

Summer camps, which are provide for eight weeks, began July 6. Staff followed the Governor’s recommendation for camps which included meeting parents in the parking lot, thus restricting access to entrances. The procedures worked great and participants were safely spread in and outside of building.

To ensure safety, the Junior Naturalist program was offered this year, but they did not assist with the animals. Also, every camp held the same group of participants together in pods of ten.
Staff continues to produce *Westwood Wednesdays*, which has been well received. The first rental in the new building was for a groom’s dinner last Friday and it went well. Two Tree Trust crews (one free and one funded) were onsite to rebuild the staircase and helped remove the old structures that were not part of the building project. Outdoor benches will be constructed from the old Glulam beams originally in the old building.

Commissioner Cantor inquired is the new nature center is receiving a lot of visitors. Mr. Oestreich indicated is has been busy with a constant stream of visitors but never overcrowded.

Commissioner Hagemann inquired how restricted occupancy works with program participants and the public in the building. Three rooms are reserved for summer camps, Mr. Oestreich explained, and the public has access to the exhibit space and hallway. This keeps program participants and the public separate. Commissioner Hagemann inquired if there is a capacity limit for the public to which Mr. Oestreich advised generally only two to four people go through the space at a time so has not been an issue.

Mr. West encouraged Commissioners to attend the ribbon cutting for the new building on September 13 at 2:30 p.m. Potentially, staff will host a 40th anniversary celebration of the old building in spring.

### 6. Staff communication

Cindy Walsh exclaimed her appreciate of staff during COVID time, especially during those early, uncertain times. Commission members will keep apprised of changes as the year progresses. She assured the commission staff is conservative when opening opportunities for those that feel comfortable using our facility and joining programs. Keep in mind youth sports may look different than high school and college sports. Staff follows what is recommended by the state and CDC. The city does not make decisions for youth associations nor 501C groups. Ms. Walsh thanked the Commissioners for their support.

### 7. Member communication

Commission members offered their assistance to staff. Ms. Walsh advised staff is continually watching the governors’ orders and doing best to keep up on changes.

Commissioner Cantor suggested moving the staff appreciation picnic generally scheduled for fall, be rescheduled in the spring. Commission members discussed and agreed to move event to spring due to current restrictions.

Commissioner Krebs advise she has reapplied to be on the commission for another year. Commissioner Cantor asked Commissioner Krebs to reach out if anything concerning comes from classmates as this time of year has not been good for mental health.
8. **Other / future agenda items**

Next meeting: September 16, 2020 and will be held via WebEx in the foreseeable future.

Commissioner Griffin may be out of town; will advise. Commissioner Cantor requested a presentation from youth soccer or football to hear what they are doing during COVID-19.

9. **Adjournment**

   *It was moved by Commissioner Hagemann, seconded by Commissioner Hollingsworth to adjourn the meeting at 7:08 p.m. The motion passed 7–0.*

Respectfully submitted,

*Stacy M. Voelker*

Recording Secretary