1. Call to order

Commissioner Hollingsworth, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. Presentation – Football Association

Jim Lombardi, Recreation Supervisor, advised the football and soccer associations, along with staff, meet annually to discuss field and facility needs. This year the season was cut short due to COVID-19. Due to the short season, the city reduced the per participant fee from $9 to $7 for field maintenance. Mr. Lombardi introduced Trent Steffy, Football Association representative to the Commissioners.

Mr. Steffy complimented the city on the field condition and staff on the organized structure to reserve the fields. Mr. Steffy provided a brief history of his tenure with the Football Association of which he currently is the vice president. The youth Football Association serves participants in grades K – 8. The association normally offers flag football program for participants in grades K – 6 and tackle program for grades 3 – 6. Grades 7 – 8 participate in the Lake Minnetonka program. Everyone gets an opportunity to play. This year, the association offered courses beginning with 4th grade only as it was difficult to provide space for the younger kids, which resulted in lower registration numbers.

The association generally provides 50-100% scholarships to approximately 10-20% participants, Mr. Steffy advised. This year they played six games versus the normal nine games due to COVID. There were six people quarantined due to COVID over the course of the season. Mr. Steffy feels it was a successful year due to the circumstances.

The association mainly utilizes Walker field and Louisiana Oaks Field #2 for practice and games. The shed space by Louisiana Oaks Park suits the associations needs perfectly to store their
equipment. Mr. Steffy appreciates the lights at Louisiana Oaks field two as it starts to get dark early in the season.

Mr. Steffy commented they are the only association that plays on grass as many are on turf fields. He feels a turf field would be great to extend the season in spring and fall. He inquired on the possibility of adding a turf field in the city.

Mr. Lombardi advised the city rotates field scheduling, so each field has time to rest as they are used a lot with soccer, football and some high school programs. Mr. Lombardi and the school district have discussed started earlier in the day but visiting teams have trouble arriving on time if it’s too early. Mr. Martenson commented games end in a timely manner, but kids linger on the field while football attempts to get on.

Commissioner Griffin asked Mr. Lombardi the general cost of a turf field. Mr. Lombardi deferred the question to Rick Beane, Parks Superintendent. Commissioner Griffin mentioned the high school turf field took approximately 10 years of discussion prior to being built. It would take a lot of fundraising and commitment, Mr. Steffy commented, but it would be nice to have. A turf field would provide a couple extra months of practice. Commissioner Hollingsworth feels it would be beneficial. Mr. Lombardi will discuss with staff.

Staff, commissioners and Mr. Steffy traded thanks. Mr. Steffy also thanked park maintenance staff for their hard work prepping the fields.

3. **Approval of minutes – September 16, 2020**

Commissioner May amended the last sentence in the first paragraph of item 5a. to state “Mr. Sullivan explained that his priorities are the city connect the park initiative and liaison with SWLRT”.

Commissioner Hagemann amended the first sentence in paragraph one of item 7 to state “Commissioner Hagemann advised that during the pandemic, Friends of the Arts has one of the only programs that still accept donations and providing musical instruments in the metro area.”

*It was moved by Commissioner Bluma seconded by Commissioner May to approve the meeting minutes of September 16, 2020 as amended. The motion passed 8–0.*

4. **Approval of agenda**

*It was moved by Commissioner Hagemann seconded by Commissioner May to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed 8–0.*
5. Business

a. Park and trail dedication: Texa-Tonka apartments on the northeast corner of Minnetonka Boulevard and Texas Avenue

Jennifer Monson, Senior Planner, advised an application was received from Paster Properties to construct Texa-Tonka apartments on the northeast corner of Texas Avenue South and Minnetonka Boulevard. The plan includes combining nine lots into one. As no new parks are planned in the area, staff recommends accepting $168,000 fees in lieu of land for park dedication. Staff also recommends the addition of a trail connection through the site to Rainbow Park in lieu of the trail fee. Commissioners viewed the site proposal and trail connection. Paster Properties would own the property, but they would ensure the trail would be available to the public.

Ms. Walsh explained Ms. Monson discussed this proposal with Mr. Beane and her prior to this meeting. Staff feels the trail would benefit the development as well as the neighborhoods to the West. Ms. Monson indicated the cost to build the proposed trail would be approximately $25,000, which is the cost of the trail dedication. If the final cost to build the trail is less than the trail dedication, the applicant would pay the difference so either way the city obtains $25,000 in infrastructure. Commissioner Cantor inquired who maintains the trail in the winter. Ms. Monson indicated the developer would maintain their section. Commissioner Hagemann inquired on the width of the trail. Ms. Monson discussed with staff and proposed the trail be eight feet side. Commissioner May asked how tall the building is to which Ms. Monson indicated the building to the north is two stories while the building to the south is three to five stories due to the topography of the site. Ms. Monson shared pictures of the proposed building which includes a front plaza and decorative fencing.

Commissioner Foulkes feels the proposal would develop the area in a positive way and commented on the number of rental properties in the city. Ms. Monson advised a housing study was done and found there is a huge demand for multifamily residents in this area. Staff has already received requests to rent units in the proposed apartments. Commissioner Griffin inquired if a new restaurant will be coming to that area to which Ms. Monson confirmed the Texa-Tonka mall will be revamped. They’ve had a great deal of interest to rent space in that area which includes a new chiropractor and new restaurant.

*It was moved by Commissioner Cantor, seconded by Commissioner Hagemann to accept cash-in-lieu of land in the amount of $168,000. The motion passed 8-0.*
b. Facilities and programs COVID-19 update

Ms. Walsh advised the governor’s recent pause created facility closures and the cancelation of programs. The Rec Center, ROC and Westwood Hills Nature Center are closed until further notice.

Mr. West provided a presentation of the virtual programs being offered during this pause. The virtual programs being offered include Park...at Home! Every Tuesday, beginning December 1, a new weekly activity will be posted. Westwood Wednesday continues their educational videos which are posted on Wednesday’s. Staff is offering six virtual skate school classes which offer off ice practice of movement/artistic class along with strength and conditioning. Westwood Hills Nature Center offers in person enrichment programs. Snowshoe rental and a trail activity kit are also available for use. The city utilizes email blasts and social media to get the word out of the programs offered.

Commissioner Griffin complimented staff on the great job being creative and continuing programs. Commissioner Krebs inquired if the information is on the St. Louis Park website, to which Mr. West confirmed.

Ms. Walsh complimented staff on the phenomenal things they do.

c. Discuss 2021 Commission workplan and initiatives

The 2020 work plan was shared with Commissioners. Commissioner Cantor reviewed the initiatives listed and members discussed as follows:

- Westwood Hills Nature Center will hold a 40th Anniversary celebration which would include view of the nature center and joint activities with Friends of the Arts.
- The Commission will continue to invite associations and other community groups to their meetings.
- The Historical Society will be invited to a meeting in early 2021 to discuss their master plan.
- Webster Park master plan process will continue in 2021.
- The Commission feels the Minnehaha Creek clean up can be completed in small groups, perhaps as family units, with the groups in different places to ensure social distancing. Staff will be available during the event to assist and provide materials for a successful clean up.

Commissioners noted some initiatives are on hold due to the pandemic and will need to modify the plan as needed.
d. **Election of Officials**

Ms. Walsh advised many of the commissions did not meet regularly in 2020 due to COVID-19, so staff decided to ask the Chair and Vice Chair elected for 2020 to continue in 2021. Commissioner Cantor and Commissioner Hollingsworth accept decision.

*It was moved by Commissioner Hagemann, seconded by Commissioner Foulkes for Commissioner Cantor to continue as chair in 2021 and Commissioner Hollingsworth to continue as vice chair in 2021. The motion passed 8-0.*

e. **Westwood Hills Nature Center update**

Mr. West indicated staff meet with HGA and RJM in hopes of finalizing punch list items by the end of the year.

Both St. Louis Park Rotaries donated a total of $50,000 for an outdoor art sculpture to be added at the nature center, Mr. West advised. The city partnered with Friends of the Arts to assist in the sculpture addition. Commissioners viewed the five-foot-tall, bronze sculptures that were created by Nicholas Legeros in his studio. Commissioner Hagemann described the cast process and will email a time lapse video of a different sculpture to Commission members so they can see the process.

Mr. West advised Maurice Hobbs donated $310,000 in honor of his late wife Barbara, who walked the nature center trails daily. They fell in love with the nature center. When Barbara passed, Maurice provided the donation to create a new pavilion. The pavilion will be located where the old interpretive center used to be and will be similar in style to the other pavilions in the city.

Westwood Hills Nature Center will also have a new nature play area, Mr. West advised, which will be located in the same area as the old playground. Seven vendors submitted proposals and over 430 residents chose the structure via Survey Monkey. The city has $100,000 budgeted in the Capital Improvement Program and received a matching DNR grant. Commission members view the proposed nature play area.

6. **Staff communication**

Ms. Walsh anticipates another park and trail proposal from Community Development at the January meeting.

7. **Member communication**

Commissioners acknowledged the challenging year it has been for staff and provided thanks.
8. **Volunteer opportunities**

Staff will advise Commission members of volunteer opportunities as they become available.

9. **Other / future agenda items**

Next meeting: January 20, 2021 and all meetings will be held via WebEx in the foreseeable future.

10. **Adjournment**

   *It was moved by Commissioner Griffin seconded by Commissioner Hagemann to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 p.m. The motion passed 8–0.*

   Respectfully submitted,

   *Stacy M. Voelker*

   Recording Secretary