

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
LITTLE CANADA, MINNESOTA**

FEBRUARY 4, 2021

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a regular meeting of the City Council of Little Canada, Minnesota was convened on the 4th day of February, 2021 in the Council Chambers of the City Center located at 515 Little Canada Road in said City.

Chair Dave Miller called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m. and the following members of the Parks & Recreation Commission were present at roll call:

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION: Hipp, Horwath, Miller, Ray, Schletty, Chu, and Abruzzese.

ALSO PRESENT: Parks & Rec/Community Services Manager Bryce Shearen.

In accordance with the requirements of Minn. Stat. Section 13D.021, the City Administrator has determined that an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent because of a health pandemic or an emergency declared under Chapter 12 of the Minnesota Statutes.

Because of the health pandemic and emergency declaration, it has been determined that attendance at the regular meeting location by elected officials and members of the public is not feasible. Therefore, some or all of the Commission members may be participating by telephone or other electronic means. This meeting will be recorded in its entirety.

Members of the public may monitor the meeting on the CTV North Suburbs website (live stream) or use the meeting link provided on the city website prior to the meeting.

MINUTES

Commissioner Horwath made a motion to approve the January 7, 2021, Parks & Recreation Commission minutes as submitted. Commissioner Schletty seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS: PIONEER PARK ENGAGEMENT

The Community Services Manager stated that RCP presented to the Commission in December and followed that with a presentation to the Council. He noted that the final report has been completed and is a substantial document that has been posted to the City's website. He encouraged the Commissioners to review that document. He stated that a joint workshop has been proposed for Wednesday, March 10th from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. for the Commission and Council. He noted that he will alert the Commission once that date is finalized by the Council. He stated that there were three different survey teams and therefore there are three different links to reports on the website.

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Chair Miller commented that he was impressed with the high amount of participation from different groups that RCP was able to gain during a pandemic.

The Community Services Manager commented on the substantial increase in participation to about 1071 individuals compared to the previous engagement for a parks master plan which had slightly over 100.

Chair Miller agreed that it would be helpful for the group to review the reports before the joint workshop with the Council.

Commissioner Hipp commented that there were multiple commonalities between the three different reports. She asked for input from staff on the role and goal of the Commission in the workshop.

The Community Services Manager commented that the intent would be for the groups to have discussion about findings from the report and recommend priorities guided by a facilitator. He provided an example noting that people can have different interpretations about some of the broad descriptions for features such as trail lighting or water features and therefore this discussion can help to ensure the groups are on the same page as they continue to draft a plan.

NEW BUSINESS: SPOONER PARK NATURE PLAY

The Community Services Manager stated that over the past few years the City has been clearing out the buckthorn at Spooner Park. He noted that the discussion tonight will be relative to the three wooded acres in the northwest corner of Spooner Park. He stated now that the buckthorn has been removed there are potential opportunities for that space, including nature play. He provided background on the concept of nature play related to Little Canada and Spooner Park specifically along with the benefits provided by nature play. He displayed photographs of the wooded area in discussion and reviewed different concepts that ranged in cost along with other additional ideas that could be incorporated into the overall area.

Commissioner Chu stated that she visited a natural park in another community and is excited to see this coming forward in Little Canada. She stated that perhaps spending some money with signage would be a nice idea. She stated that she also likes structure climbing and the rope, suggesting a medium plan and includes structure and non-structure.

Commissioner Ray stated that he also likes a mixture of one and three, having the rope feature and some more non-structured activities.

Commissioner Abruzzese commented that the more structure that is imposed, the less natural is it and therefore likes the first concept. She noted that she could support the signage and ropes as well.

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Commissioner Schletty stated that hopefully play begins in that area and still leaves the option for that play to spread and therefore does not want people to feel that they must stay within a designated area. He noted that perhaps some signage would be helpful to let people know it is a play area and make it welcoming.

Commissioner Horwath agreed that an entrance would be helpful along with signage encouraging play. He stated that he visited many parks last summer, including nature play areas, noting that the kids loved playing in the nature play area. He stated that he would like to see the freedom for kids to play and explore nature. He stated that while he would not want parents to overly control their children, there should be some kind of supervision. He noted that perhaps a log could be placed to allow parents to sit and watch. He stated that some parks have things like cribbage boards carved into large logs, which provides another recreation activity. He did not believe \$5,000 would be necessary but agreed that some kind of signage would be helpful.

Commissioner Chu agreed that whatever is done should become part of the natural path to get to the area. She stated that this could be a progressive process, beginning minimally and evolving.

Chair Miller noted that minimal signage could be used that includes a QR Code that provides additional explanation. He commented that staff did a great job on the proposal.

Commissioner Horwath noted that the arborists do have a relationship with that park and there should be an ample supply of natural materials to use in that area.

The Community Services Manager confirmed that public works could be directed to bring logs to the area from trees that fall rather than chipping them for use in other areas. He stated that the final home has not been discussed for a parking lot and therefore it would make sense to keep things minimal and create a test area, to begin with. He stated that if the area needs to be moved in the future it could then easily be done so.

Commissioner Ray asked if this could move forward this spring.

The Community Services Manager confirmed that would be the intent.

Commissioner Chu suggested that the sign be movable in the case that the area is relocated at a later time. She asked if there could be an option for residents to bring branches or something to the park area.

Chair Miller stated that would be a great idea but cautioned that could easily become a dumping ground.

Commissioner Hipp stated that when she first moved to the community it was nice to see walking paths that went through the middle of wooded areas which helps to promote exploration.

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Hipp introduced the following motion:

***DIRECT STAFF TO PROCEED WITH CREATING A NATURE PLAY AREA AT
SPOONER PARK OF MINIMAL DESIGN WITH A SIGN***

The foregoing motion was duly seconded by Horwath.
Ayes (7). Nays (0). Motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS: PARK SIGNAGE

The Community Services Manager provided an update on parks signage. He stated that there are currently two projects related to park entrance signs and park interpretive signage. He hoped to have some draft sign entrance concepts for the group to review at the next meeting but noted that there would be slightly longer before the interpretative signage concepts are ready for review due to the resignation of the Recreation Coordinator.

Commissioner Hipp commented that she has received requests for distance markers and park rules signs.

The Community Services Manager confirmed that those would be part of the discussion.

Chair Miller noted that signs do not always have to be typical signs, noting that distance markers could be painted on trees.

NEW BUSINESS: RECREATION COORDINATOR UPDATE

The Community Services Manager commented that Claire did a fantastic job, and it was only a matter of time before she moved on. He expressed appreciation for all of her effort while she was with Little Canada. He stated that if all things go well with recruitment, a hire could be approved at the April 14th City Council meeting.

Chair Miller echoed the comments of appreciation noting that it was clear Claire wanted to be up north and wished her well.

REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Abruzzese reported that the Bike Rack Subcommittee has been meeting to review different options and hoped to have a presentation to bring to the Commission in March. She welcomed any input from Commissioners before that time that they feel would be helpful to have in the presentation. She noted that she has enjoyed some sledding with her daughter at Spooner Park along with walking through the cleared-out area discussed for the nature park area.

Commissioner Schletty stated that his daughter and niece are taking skating lessons and commented that Commissioner Ray's daughter is doing a great job as the instructor. He noted that the rink and warming house is in great shape.

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Commissioner Chu stated that she has been using her time to explore parks in other cities recently to get new ideas. She stated that she recently noticed manmade mounds along the trail for the bikes to go up and down which the children seemed to be enjoying.

Chair Miller commented that he drove by Veterans Memorial Park, noting that it has a great path that ends in two places. He stated that connecting paths should continue to be a focus of park planning.

Commissioner Hipp commented that the playground at the park she was assigned was small but seems to be well used, even during the winter months. She stated that she also snowshoed across Pioneer Park and commented that it was beautiful, and she enjoyed the experience of further exploring the park. She stated that she is looking forward to researching additional nature play options, little libraries, and other recreation options.

Commissioner Horwath commented that he had a chance to walk on the path on Gervais Lake, explaining that someone plowed a path around the lake which was cool to walk. He stated that he also noticed a fat tire biker on that path. He stated that he continues to see a lot of footprints on the trails which continue to be cleared by City staff. He thanked the public works staff for continuing to make that recreation opportunity available. He commented that he is very excited to see the nature play area coming forward.

Commissioner Ray commented that he is a member of a neighborhood forum, Next Door Lake Gervais, and stated that someone posted on there stating that the City was looking for ideas for Pioneer Park. He stated that he commented that as a member of the Park Commission he would forward those comments, which did he provide to staff.

Chair Miller commented that it is his neighbor that uses his four-wheeler and plow to make the trail on the lake and confirmed that he would pass on the message of appreciation.

UPDATES

The Community Services Manager reported that the Little Canada Fire Department is going to be selling their annual booya on Saturday in a drive-thru format in both quart and bowl containers. He commented that the LCRA ice fishing contest was canceled. He stated that he did not receive any proposed changes related to City Code and therefore action is not required on that item.

Chair Miller stated that when you read into the language you could first interpret that as the Commission is responsible for those items but as you continue to read it is clear that the Commission is the sounding board and recommending body for the City Council.

The Community Services Manager reported that registration has opened for spring and summer youth activities. He stated that the City has partnered with the U of M Master Gardeners to offer virtual classes, which continue to be a popular offering. He stated that classes continue to be

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offered with participants ranging in age and location. He stated that the defensive driver course is open for registration, noting that capacity was limited because it is an in-person course.

Commissioner Ray asked if the former Recreation Coordinator was planning to hold the Boundary Water training course.

The Community Services Manager replied that the course was open for registration, but no one signed up and with the resignation of that staff member, he canceled the course.

Commissioner Hipp asked for details on the partnership with the U of M Master Gardeners.

The Community Services Manager confirmed that the City does pay for the service and is then able to choose which courses it would like to offer to residents. He noted that the City then charges a nominal fee for participation as they have found that better attendance is gained in that manner compared to offering free courses. He commented that it is not a money-making program but is focused on offering programming that the community enjoys.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.