

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

**JULY 1, 2021**

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a regular meeting of the City Council of Little Canada, Minnesota was convened on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of July 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 6:30 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, Josh Shields and Maddie Dahlheimer from Bolton & Menk.

**MINUTES**

Commissioner Horwath made a motion to approve the June 3, 2021, Parks & Recreation Commission minutes as submitted. Commissioner Chu seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**PARKS AND RECREATION MISSION STATEMENT**

Chair Miller read the Park and Recreation mission statement.

**PRESENTATION: PIONEER PARK MASTER PLAN PRESENTATION BY BOLTON AND MENK**

The Community Services Manager commented that the consultants from Bolton & Menk are present tonight to provide an update on their presentation from the previous month.

Josh Shields, Bolton & Menk, commented that following the last meeting there was a period of online engagement with the public.

Madeline Dahlheimer, Bolton & Menk, stated that in June there was an active survey focused on the playground and water feature elements along with an interactive map with all the park features that allowed comments to be added. She reviewed the methods used to promote engagement. She provided an overview of the interactive map comments including athletic field improvements, enhanced vegetation and plant nursery, stormwater and solar comments, access/accessibility, and playground/play node. She stated that while the official comment period has closed, the interactive map would remain open for comments. She stated that 123 responses were received on the survey and shared some of the general comments received. She

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reviewed the survey results directly related to the playground equipment along with the engagement received during the 2020 RCP engagement process.

Chair Miller asked if any of the comments brought forward something that may not have been considered or whether they were consistent with the discussion that has occurred thus far.

Ms. Dahlheimer stated that the comments remain in line with what was heard during the previous engagement noting that there were many comments related to the water feature.

Commissioner Hipp commented on the ideas for a natural theme and more relaxed setting, noting that many of the features could tie into that theme. She referenced the art that was provided by the schools in 2020 related to the kids' ideas for a perfect park and asked if some of those could be displayed at the booth for Canadian Days to draw people in.

Ms. Dahlheimer commented that there would be a great opportunity to tie in the different pieces with the overall flow throughout the park.

The Community Services Manager commented that it was the hope to post those pictures but there was difficulty due of the pandemic. He stated that staff can work to find a place to display those pieces of art, whether that be at the school or City Hall.

Commissioner Ray asked if the playground could be slightly bigger because it is a bigger park or whether the playground would be mirrored to what was done at Spooner.

Mr. Shields commented that the existing playground is about 6,500 square feet while Spooner is about 7,500 square feet. He noted that the playground concepts displayed in June were slightly under 10,000 and stretch the play equipment out a bit more across the space as well as including space for a potential water feature.

Commissioner Horwath commented that he currently works at Pearl Recreation Center in Minneapolis which is going through a similar process. He stated that the comments received thus far in that process centered around features like zip lines and shade options.

Commissioner Abruzzese stated that she has a small child and if there is no shade available, they do not stay at a park for very long.

Commissioner Chu stated that perhaps shade is provided with umbrellas.

Commissioner Horwath noted that shade sails are a great option as well for open areas like this.

Ms. Dahlheimer agreed that they could creatively incorporate shade and seating options throughout the play node. She reviewed the survey results related to the water feature along with the input received from the 2020 RCP engagement.

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Commissioner Ray asked for input on the comments that were received against the water feature.

Ms. Dahlheimer stated that those responses were not detailed and simply stated they did not want a water feature. She stated that through the engagement process and feedback received, there has been more support for more naturalized features including the water feature.

Commissioner Ray commented that while the bright-colored splash pads draw kids in, he is drawn more to the naturalized water feature style.

Commissioner Chu stated that the more natural features also allow adults to sit and enjoy that natural environment.

Commissioner Horwath noted that the Minnesota Zoo has a more natural splash pad area that children enjoy.

Commissioner Abruzzese stated that Spooner Park is more natural in setting with lots of trees, but Pioneer Park is more open with athletic fields and wanted to ensure that the park is thematically consistent. She stated that she does like the more natural water feature as the water would not be running in the colder months and therefore the area could still be useful in the other months rather than a bright feature that does not serve a purpose when not in use. She stated that she likes the water jets that shoot up.

Commissioner Schletty agreed that they have discussed a multi-purpose area that could be used for another purpose when the water feature is not on.

Chair Miller agreed that the flow should remain consistent throughout the park.

Commissioner Ray commented that while there are not mature trees for shade, bringing in natural rock features would help to break that up.

Commissioner Horwath noted that he recently attended an event in another community that has a splash pad. He noted that the city is having problems with pumps not working. He stated that he would like to see some guarantees that that equipment would run well, and that City staff would be comfortable with the maintenance that would be needed to keep it running well.

Mr. Shields stated that trail lighting was not specifically included in the survey but reviewed some of the comments around lighting. He stated that there would be an opportunity to do a banner or logo incorporated on different elements to carry through an overall flow.

Commissioner Hipp asked if the trails would be widened.

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Mr. Shields commented that he is unsure that has been a focus of discussion but noted that there have been discussions related to general trail improvements.

The Community Services Manager commented that further investigation into utilities that are underground is needed. He stated that there are some areas that could be easily widened while others would create additional challenges.

Ms. Dahlheimer stated that there has been a strong desire to create a winter activity loop that would be separate from the paved paths. She noted that would be a consideration in terms of space and if the trails were widened that could cause conflict.

The Community Services Manager noted that the City is purchasing snowshoes this year for residents to rent and could utilize a winter activity loop.

Mr. Shields moved to the topic of communicating site context and history and identified opportunities to integrate that throughout the park with different elements and signage.

Commissioner Chu asked for clarity on whose history it would be in that context. She stated that she views the history concept as past, present, and future cultures of the residents, noting the evolution of the identity of Little Canada residents.

Mr. Shields noted that a fairly simple background allows for messaging to be changed out over time in an inexpensive way.

Commissioner Hipp commented that the timing would be impeccable to do something like that and celebrate history and culture.

Mr. Shields noted that the messaging, similar to lighting, could be spread to other park spaces in the future as well.

Commissioner Hipp asked if someone is digging into the history at this point.

The Community Services Manager stated that at this point this is just a plan and once the plan is completed, different tasks could be assigned to different people/groups.

Chair Miller stated that he likes the idea of being able to change the messaging on signage over time.

The Community Services Manager commented that many people stop to read the different signs and he would be comfortable adding many more signs at different locations. He stated that he receives many positive comments related to the different types of educational signage. He noted that he also likes the idea of changing messaging to keep people engaged.

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Commissioner Abruzzese provided an example of another park that tied public art into benches and seating.

Commissioner Horwath stated that there was a park on a previous tour that had different elements built into the playground equipment, such as famous quotes.

Commissioner Chu commented that she loves the idea of incorporating art as part of the programming to engage the community.

Mr. Shields reviewed details related to tree management.

Commissioner Hipp commented that perimeter landscaping will be a great improvement.

Commissioner Ray commented that in the spring they noticed flowering fruit trees and asked if there is a reason those are not within the parks.

The Community Services Manager commented that there are a lot of flowering trees within the parks but noted that they only have a two-week window where they flower and therefore often go unnoticed. He was unsure if there were flowering trees in Pioneer Park.

Commissioner Abruzzese commented that it would be nice to have trees that people could eat the fruit from as well, such as apple trees or berry bushes. She stated that she likes the idea of a tree nursery that is mutually beneficial if trees need replacement anyway.

Mr. Shields identified the next steps. He provided some information related to cost and prioritization in order to create an implementation plan that could be phased.

Commissioner Horwath commented that he believes the playground replacement should be the first priority.

Commissioner Abruzzese stated that she would feel the prioritization should follow the order that was presented tonight unless specific grant opportunities arise that bring one element to the top.

Chair Miller agreed that the options should be ready in case grant opportunities present themselves.

The Community Services Manager agreed that having the plan in place helps to move forward on elements when opportunities arise.

Commissioner Ray commented that lighting would be something that could easily move forward at a low cost and would be impactful to the park.

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Chair Miller noted that while that may seem easy, improvements to the trail could impact lighting and therefore that sequence should be identified within the plan.

Commissioner Chu commented that while lighting could be a small win, there also needs to be a consideration for trail improvements as well. She noted that she would not want to see lights installed that would need to be removed in one year when trails are perhaps improved. She noted that all the improvements could have some ability for phasing as to what could be done now and what could be done later.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Chair Miller welcomed everyone back to in-person meetings. He noted that perhaps there will be an opportunity for hybrid meetings in the future.

**NEW BUSINESS: CANADIAN DAYS ENGAGEMENT**

The Community Services Manager stated that Bolton & Menk will provide a display for the event that can be used at the Commission booth to receive input from the public. He requested that Commissioners volunteer for two-hour shifts for the event.

The Commission members volunteered for different shifts.

**UPDATES**

The Community Services Manager stated that on July 14 the City Council will be receiving an update on the Pioneer Park Master Plan process. He noted that Commission members are welcome and invited to attend. He provided an update on Emerald Ash Borer, noting that the City trees have been surveyed and inventoried to determine where treatment should occur. He stated that treatment is not currently included in the budget but can be included in the 2022 budget. He noted that some cities do not want to treat and would prefer removal, but the City Council supports attempting to treat as much as possible. He stated that funds have been allocated to begin treatment this year in order to prevent a situation where treatment would not be beneficial next year. He stated that half of the trees were determined to be untreatable, and he would suggest replanting a variety of trees in their place. He stated that the inventory of right-of-way trees is still being completed. He noted that in general the Council supports the treatment of the Ash trees in the parks for as long as possible because of the shade provided and therefore treatment would occur every two years. He noted that some trees would be removed because they are not treatable or in inconvenient locations.

Commissioner Hipp stated that perhaps some educational signs could be posted for the public.

The Community Services Manager confirmed that all treated trees would be marked. He advised of the upcoming Ice Cream Social which will take place the Thursday before Canadian Days and

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provided details on the event. He stated that he will provide an update on grant applications at the next meeting.

**OTHER**

No additional comments.

**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*