



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
Fridley Municipal Center
7071 University Ave NE, Fridley MN 55432

MINUTES

OCTOBER 4, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Heinz called the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Mike Heintz, Eric Evanson, EB Graham, Peter Borman, and Shanna Larson

Members Absent: Ryan Gerhard and Ken Schultz

Others Present: Mike Maher, Community Services Director; Springbrook Nature Center Manager Tara Rogness; Jeff Jensen, Operations Manager for Streets, Parks and Facilities.

2. APPROVE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA FOR OCTOBER 4, 2021

MOTION by Commissioner Larson to APPROVE the October 4, 2021 meeting agenda with the addition of an item to New Business for the Proposed 2022 Meeting Dates. SECONDED by Commissioner Graham. The MOTION PASSED unanimously.

3. APPROVE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES FOR SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

MOTION by Commissioner Larson to APPROVE the September 7, 2021 meeting minutes. SECONDED by Commissioner Graham. The MOTION PASSED unanimously.

4. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS:

- a. Introduction to Springbrook Nature Center Manager, Tara Rogness

Community Services Director Mike Maher stated that Tara Rogness has taken on a new roll at Springbrook Nature Center this past year.

Springbrook Nature Center Manager Tara Rogness introduced herself to the Commission. She stated that she has been at Springbrook since 2001 and provided background information on herself and her career experience.

Chair Heintz stated that Ms. Rogness was such a force in the vision for Springbrook and provided a lot of great input.

b. Pumpkin Night in the Park History, 2021 Event Update, and Discussion

Springbrook Nature Center Manager Tara Rogness reviewed a history of the Pumpkin Night in the Park event and how it has evolved over the years. She stated that the event will be held on Saturday, October 23rd from 5 to 9 p.m. with a limited number of tickets available. She highlighted some of the activities that are included in the event for a cost of \$10 per ticket. She stated that volunteers are still needed for different activities for the event and interested individuals can sign up online.

Commissioner Evanson asked who is carving the pumpkins.

Ms. Rogness stated that there are a variety of public events available where members of the public assist in carving pumpkins.

Commissioner Larson asked if people could take pumpkins home at the end of the night.

Ms. Rogness stated that they tell people that if they have carved a pumpkin, they can stay until the end of the night to take their pumpkin. She stated that otherwise the pumpkins are not moved until the day after the event when they are piled for deer.

Commissioner Borman recognized that the tickets will be limited because of COVID and asked if there is an idea of how ticket sales are going.

Ms. Rogness replied that about 1,200 tickets have been sold. She estimated that about 2,500 tickets would be sold in total. She provided details on previous attendance numbers, noting that it varies depending on the weather. She stated that parking is not allowed at Springbrook that evening but parking is available across the street on the west side of Evergreen as well as a shuttle to and from the High School to allow parking at that site.

c. Park System Improvement Plan Task Force Progress Update and Discussion

Community Development Director Mike Maher stated that minutes from recent park system improvement task force meetings have been included in the agenda packet. He provided background information noting that several years ago the City began on the path to reimagine its park system. He stated that the City worked with a consultant to develop concept plans to update each of the community parks. Those concept plans were placed online over the spring in order to receive feedback from residents. He stated that the consultant is now refining the park plans to reflect the comments received. He stated that this summer, the City Council provided additional direction to staff to refine the park improvement plan to something that could be accomplished in ten years or less and to reduce the cost of the improvements from \$50,000,000 to \$30,000,000. He stated that in order to accomplish that, two resident task force groups were formed; noting that one is focused on refinement while the other is focused on finance. He reviewed some of the things being considered by each task force in order to make recommendations to the Council.

Commissioner Larson commented that based on the minutes it appears that there is good participation, and this is a fruitful process.

Mr. Maher confirmed that it is a productive process and noted that members of Commissions are also participating.

Commissioner Borman provided an update and noted that he believes the next few minutes will be more focused as the first few meetings were meant to introduce everyone and bring them up to speed.

d. Proposed 2022 Meeting Dates

Community Development Director Mike Maher reviewed the proposed 2022 meeting schedule. He stated that typically the Commission meets on the first Monday evening of each month, with a few variations because of conflicts. He highlighted some of those variations as proposed.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Evanson to accept the 2022 meeting schedule. Seconded by Commissioner Graham.

Further discussion: Chair Heintz noted that Tuesday, September 6th is the first day of school and therefore it could be tough for those with students. He suggested moving the meeting to the following Monday.

Mr. Maher commented that he would be hesitant to confirm that change at this moment without having the schedule of Council meetings and other events with him. He noted that he could review that schedule and a change could be made in the future if necessary.

Chair Heintz confirmed that this schedule could be voted on and a change could be made at a later time if needed.

The MOTION PASSED unanimously.

5. OLD BUSINESS:

None.

6. STAFF REPORTS:

a. Park Maintenance and Construction Report

Operations Manager for Streets, Parks and Facilities Jeff Jenson provided an update on the park maintenance and construction projects. He commented that they focused on maintenance during the summer because they were short staffed and began on construction projects this fall.

Commissioner Borman stated that the progress at Craig Park looks good. He commented that there have been issues with drainage in the past and asked if the improvements are solving that problem.

Mr. Jenson confirmed that the City was able to obtain a grant from the watershed district in order to solve the stormwater issues. He noted that because the ground was already being torn apart for that project, the City was able to make some other park improvements at the same time. He provided additional details on the stormwater improvements that were completed. He commented that they completed a success outreach effort prior to the project and hoped that could be used as a model that could be replicated on future park improvement projects.

Commissioner Evanson asked for information on the staffing challenges.

Mr. Jenson stated that the seasonal employees have returned to college. He anticipated that they would continue to see the same issue in the spring. He explained that in the past they would have 60 applicants but the past year or two they have run about six to eight seasonal employees less than desired. He noted

that they have made adjustments to age requirements and pay in attempt to attract more applicants.

Chair Heintz asked if the City works to retain those seasonal employees for the next year.

Mr. Jenson confirmed that they have a good rate of retainage. He noted that typically once the seasonal employee is hired, they return each summer until they graduate from college and move on to another job.

Commissioner Larson asked for an update on the park behind the Civic Center.

Mr. Jenson replied that the park is great and getting a lot of use. He noted that the grass does not look great because it was not able to establish during the drought. He stated that they hope to start fresh and reseed in the spring.

b. Fridley Parks and Recreation Division Report

Community Development Director Mike Maher provided an overview of the park and recreation division including recreation programing and events, noting that the full report was included in the packet.

c. Springbrook Nature Center Report

Springbrook Nature Center Manager Tara Rogness provided an overview of her report, noting that classroom activity has returned. She highlighted classroom programing and other activities. She provided details on their partnership with the different schools.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Larson made the MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m., SECONDED by Commissioner Evanson. The MOTION PASSED unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Staple
Recording Secretary