



Park Commission Meeting

April 3, 2023

7:00 PM

Fridley City Hall, 7071 University Avenue NE

Minutes

Call to Order

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

Present

Luke Cardona
EB Graham
Peter Borman
Tim Kirk
Ken Schultz
Don Whalen
Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director

Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Agenda for April 3, 2023

Motion by Commissioner Cardona to approve the April 3, 2023 meeting agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Graham. The motion passed unanimously.

Approve Parks & Recreation Commission Minutes for March 6, 2023

Motion by Commissioner Schultz to approve the March 6, 2023 meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

1. Commission Check-In with Fridley Youth Sports Association (FYSA) Football

Parks and Recreation Director Mike Maher stated that this month the group is continuing with the check-ins of community groups and youth sports. He introduced the representatives from Fridley Youth Sports Association (FYSA) present tonight.

John Swanson and Jason Karsten, FYSA, provided an update on participation numbers from the past year, fees and scholarships. The program uses the high school fields for practice and is able to keep its fees low because of donations and fundraising. It was noted that the lighting could be improved at the City field used by the program.

Mr. Maher provided the concept for improvements at Commons Park, which are tentatively scheduled for 2025. He stated that the lighting would be updated at that time but noted that maintenance would inspect the lighting for the fields this year to make sure everything is working.

The Commission thanked the representatives from FYSA for their contributions to the program and the community.

2. Commission Introduction to Kizen Academy Soccer Club

Mr. Maher introduced the representatives from Kizen Academy Soccer Club.

Will Totimeh and Jeremy Harris, Kizen Academy Soccer Club, introduced themselves and provided information on how their nonprofit sports program evolved to provide access to soccer programming for families with lesser financial means. The program runs year-round using both indoor and outdoor facilities. They were interested in working with the City to find indoor space that would be accessible for the program, as the pricing for the current space continues to increase. They provided information on programming, registration, demographics, and fees. Information was also provided on challenges the program currently faces with indoor and outdoor space, costs for use of those spaces, and equipment storage. It was noted that children at the park often ask to join the program and are able to do so because of the mission of the program.

Mr. Maher stated that staff has met with the organization informally and has been reviewing the field and facility use policy, which will be discussed later on the agenda. It was noted that the program had been using Commons Park because of the ease of accessibility, but they are exploring potential use of other locations.

The Commission hoped that there could be an agreement developed which would avoid the first come, first serve scenario for the program.

3. Fridley Parks and Recreation Scholarship Program Policy Options

Mr. Maher provided background information on the current scholarship program and then provided different options for the Commission to consider related to eligibility, program format, and eligible programs. He also reviewed programs that are available to the public at no cost.

The Commission suggested linking volunteer hours for those receiving financial scholarships and it was explained that the scholarships are not eligible for youth sports association. Examples were provided of the parks and recreation programming. The Commission recognized that the current process is cumbersome to staff and residents.

Motion by Commissioner Cardona to support option three for the scholarship program eligibility. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission asked for information on the demographics utilizing the scholarship program. It was confirmed that once a family qualifies, they typically continue to utilize the program. The Commission expressed support for those receiving assistance to have some "skin in the game" in terms of participating in registration costs, even to a small degree.

Motion by Commissioner Graham to support option two for the scholarship program format. Seconded by Commissioner Cardona. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Outdoor Athletic Field/Facility Rental Guidelines and Fees

Mr. Maher provided an overview of the existing field and facility use policy including user groups and user fees as well as proposed changes to consider.

The Commission noted that the requirement for 85 percent of participants to be residents seems high as the user groups that have come forward to provide updates are not at that rate. The Commission asked if there is verification of the qualification for the different user group categories. There was also discussion of the issue of public parks versus requiring user groups to schedule time for use. Mr. Maher provided details on how staff works with the user groups to determine proper field use and related fees. He noted that having the proper policy provides staff with the necessary tools.

The Commission asked staff to further research whether nonprofits supporting Fridley youth could be moved to category A and whether the residency requirement should be lowered. Mr. Maher agreed that the residency requirement should be softened, perhaps between 60 and 75 percent. He also did not believe that there were many nonprofits of that type that would put a burden on the fields and therefore did not see an issue with moving that group to category A.

Old Business

Staff Reports

5. Springbrook Nature Center Report

Mr. Maher provided a brief overview of the written report.

6. Fridley Parks and Recreation Division Report

Mr. Maher provided an overview of the report, highlighting upcoming programming and event opportunities. He also provided an update on the implementation of the parks improvement plan projects planned for 2023 and funding requests.

7. Park Maintenance and Construction Report

Mr. Maher provided an overview of the written report noting that staff is working to transition from winter to spring activities and have been busy with snow removal.

Unfinished Business

None

Adjournment

Commissioner Kirk made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:14 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Whalen. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Staple
Recording Secretary