



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

April 05, 2021

7:00 PM

Fridley Civic Campus - 7071 University Avenue N.E.

MINUTES

Two new members of the Parks and Recreation Commission, Ken Schultz and Eric Evanson, will be introduced to the Commission in the City Council Chambers on April 5, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order

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

Roll Call

Members Present: Mike Heintz, Shanna Larson, EB Graham, Peter Borman, Ryan Gerhard, and Ken Schultz. Guest: Eric Evanson

Others Present: Mike Maher, Springbrook Nature Center Director/Assistant Director (CSER); Parks and Facilities; Deborah Dahl, Director of Community Services and Employee Resources (CSER); Jeff Jensen – Operations Manager for Parks, Streets and Facilities

Approval of Agenda

MOTION by Commissioner Larson to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Graham. The MOTION PASSED unanimously.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

1. Parks and Recreation Commission meeting minutes for March 1, 2021

MOTION by Commissioner Larson to approve the March 1, 2021 meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Graham. The MOTION PASSED unanimously.

New Business

2. Introduction of new Parks and Recreation Commission members

Ms. Dahl introduced the two new members of the Commission and asked them to share some information about themselves. Ken Schultz shared that he is a lifelong resident of Fridley and an active member of the community serving on Boards for the baseball and soccer plus coaching. He said he believes the city parks are a vital component to get people involved in the community.

Eric Evanson said he moved to Fridley four years ago and is passionate about helping make the park system best for Fridley residents. He looks forward to making the future park plans become a reality for Fridley residents.

Ms. Dahl said that the City Council is planning to expand this Commission to seven members and will adopt the change at their next meeting. In the meantime, Mr. Evanson is attending as a guest and will officially join the Commission at the next meeting.

Ms. Dahl said that the Council decided that this is an opportunity to have broader representation on the Commission and will particularly help with the master park planning process and implementation.

3. Revised Parks and Recreation Commission Schedule

Updated schedule was included in the packet.

4. Parks Master Plan Update

Deb Dahl said that there is a lot happening with the parks master plan system and reported on the following items:

- Since February the Storymap on the City's website is completed with surveys. Resident phone survey was conducted of 400 households with questions about the parks master plan.
- The parks master plan effort is largest Marketing and Community Engagement Campaign was launched, and a staff team is meeting weekly to push information out. A variety of materials have been produced like postcards, stack cards, yard signs, videos and a short commercial. Individual parks are targeted with additional promotions. Additional plans include: updates on the City's website, social media, nextdoor.com; Fridley for you emails; digital billboard; city newsletter articles; community connection videos; and lawn signs in parks and throughout the city. Presentations will be given to Commissions, key groups and internal staff.
- Staff is connecting with key stakeholder groups like schools, police advisor committee, Anoka County Fridley community network, master gardeners and faith-based organizations. Information will be distributed to the recreation participants as well. A pop-up event is scheduled at Edgewater Gardens with 2-3 more events coming soon. 514 surveys were completed on the plan concepts on the Storymap. All feedback is being tracked and archived.
- Park Champion network is established with developing plans for long-term involvement. Staff are considering hosting a park champion appreciation event.

- Charter Commission presentation meeting was tonight, the SNC Board on April 12 and EQEC on April 15. There is a June 5 Town Hall Meeting at 10 a.m. at Fridley Civic Campus to discuss general updates, resident survey report and a Parks Master Plan Update.

5. Recreation Report on Pickleball

Deb Dahl stated that Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in the country.

- Pickleball is a cross between tennis, ping pong and badminton. Play starts with an underhand serve delivered diagonally across the court. A volley hitting the ball back and forth continues until one team/individual hits the ball out of bounds.
- A pickleball court is slightly smaller than a tennis court and the same size as a badminton court. The net of a pickleball court is also slightly lower than a tennis net. Pickleball is played with a wooden or plastic paddle and a plastic ball that resembles a wiffleball.
- Fridley and Spring Lake Park have pickleball groups. Outdoor courts are at Commons Park and Flanery Park. Indoor courts are at Hayes Elementary School Gym. Indoor space was booked nearly every weekend holding 9 reservations between January – March 2021. Fridley recreation programs features open pickleball available at Flanery Park Monday-Thursday between 10 am – 12 pm and 4-6 pm depending on the day of the week.
- An open pickleball email list has been created for members in the community to stay in contact with one another and receive updates from Fridley Recreation on upcoming pickleball programs. There are currently 17 participants on this list. A doubles pickleball league is planned for the beginner and intermediate level players. Games will be primarily played at Flanery Park. Games can also be played at Commons Park if extra courts are needed. League dates are June 5 – July 10.
- Two different types of Pickleball Clinics are offered. A step 1 clinic is designed to introduce and improve player's skills while focusing on the fundamentals of the game. Step II Clinics are made to take players skills to the next level and work on more intermediate skills and drills. Pickleball Clinics are taught entirely by experienced pickleball players who volunteer to instruct the clinics. Volunteers also work to promote further pickleball programs in Fridley. Step I Clinics are May 15-16 and July 17-18. Step II Clinics are May 22-23 and July 24-25.

Old Business

Staff Reports

6. General Staff Report

Deb Dahl announced she is retiring in May and Mike Maher has been promoted to Director of Community Services effective May 22, 2021. Mike will oversee Springbrook Nature Center and

Recreation Divisions. He has worked for the City as the Director of Springbrook Nature Center for eight years.

- In 2020, Mike was promoted to Assistant Director of Community Services. Mike is an outstanding leader and exceptionally qualified with skills and experience in strategic planning, organization, program curriculum development, staff development, marketing and communications, financial acumen, fundraising and development, environmental and wildlife management, and foundation board and volunteer involvement.
- He successfully managed a large budget and robust fundraising campaigns. He has led many large popular events and programs with help of and in coordination with hundreds of volunteers. Completed the final phase of the SPRING Project with the construction of the Picnic Pavilion and Activity Center. Currently staff is working on long-range planning for the SNC and Recreation Divisions. He led the divisions in programming summit and was on the Parks Master Plan Leadership Team. Voluntarily served on a number of internal teams and committees to enhance the City's workforce culture.
- He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education, over 20 years of experience as an educator and administrator. He has served as the Curriculum Coordinator at Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center in Lanesboro for five years before moving to Wisconsin to serve as the Executive Director of the Manitowoc County Historical Society. There, Mike worked with a Board of Directors to oversee the operation of two large museums and directed the non-profit organizations membership, fundraising and operations of more than 60 buildings.
- Currently Mike serves on the Champlin Park and Recreation Commission and is well qualified and positioned to take Community Services to the next level. He is respected and admired by Council, staff and external partners. Congratulations Mike!

Ms. Dahl mentioned the 2022 Budget Process and Capital Improvement Program will be discussed at the May Commission Meeting. An electronic newsletter for Recreation Division is coming in May. Summer hiring continues and summer programs start the second week in June. Fall program planning is already underway.

There is a new concert series for this summer with six concerts at Civic Campus, three at Springbrook Nature Center and one at Commons Park. Concerts may be cancelled due to inclement weather and COVID restrictions may apply.

7. 2021 Parks Maintenance Plan

Jeff Jenson said that the new playground at Locke Park was finished last year. Park benches, shade shelter, picnic benches, garbage cans and bike racks are yet to be installed. Landscaping with bee lawns and pollinator gardens will be planted. Solar lights with security cameras

will also be installed along with dog stations for dog clean up. Wayfinding signs will be installed to help people navigate through the regional trails.

Staff is working with Anoka County on Locke Park improvements as there is a Joint Powers Agreement between Fridley and Anoka County. The University beautification project still has some fences to remove and work on plantings, but this is on a high-speed road so working on a safety plan first. This work should be done this summer.

Commissioner Borman asked if the planting on University was maintained by the city.

Mr. Jensen answered yes, the state will supply what the City wants and then the City would maintain it.

Chair Heinz asked with Ms. Dahl retiring if Jeff would be doing more parks projects and Mr. Maher recreation.

Mr. Jensen said they would continue to work together like they currently do now.

8. Craig Park Update

Mr. Jensen said that there has been a stormwater issue at this park for many years and a grant was received from the watershed district to help fix the problem. When the stormwater problem is fixed, the park will be redone at the same time. This is a learning opportunity for marketing, design, and outreach. Postcards were sent to residents in the area and staff received great feedback. The stormwater design is complete and the project is going out for bid. There will be an outreach meeting at the park in July with construction starting sometime in August. The project should be done this fall.

9. Community Engagement Report

- Adopt a Park Program – 16 groups originally adopted parks is now there are 24 groups. There are still parks available for adoption, the list is on Fridley's website.
- City-wide Garage Sale June 25-27
- Citywide Cleanup is being scheduled for September
- Fridley Community Network Group – nonprofits and government agencies connect and discuss collaboration with each other's missions.
- Sunday, August 21, Anoka County is hosting an outdoor Latino connect event at Locke Park featuring outdoor recreational activities, music and food.
- June 17 there will be an engagement event for the new Locke playground, an open house celebration of completion of the project.

Commissioner Heinz asked if adopt a park volunteers work closely with Mr. Jensen on what needs to be done in the park.

Mr. Jensen replied that all volunteers are trained, and staff discuss what they can/can't do. The City provides materials if needed and teach them to look for safety hazards that need attention.

Commissioner Larson asked if the Locke playground open house would include the Mayor and Commissioners in attendance.

Mr. Maher was not sure of those details are unknown at this time. He will send an update to the Commission.

Eric Evanson asked if the volunteers for Adopt a Park clean and maintain the park more than four times a year.

Mr. Maher replied that some groups some tend to go out on a weekly basis and be more engaged than the quarterly clean up.

10. Springbrook Nature Center Report

Mr. Maher said that SNC is open at limited capacity, 15-20 at a time. Visitation is at an all-time high and the park is very busy. Rental of the new pavilion activity center and classroom space will start May 1st at limited capacity.

A series of candlelight hikes took place this winter and all were filled to capacity.

Free upcoming programs include a Migration Celebration on May 8th from 9-12. This is an outdoor event featuring exhibitors and vendors attending. The event is sponsored by the SNC Foundation.

Submitted grant to excel energy foundation for exhibit on bird watching

Earth Day Eco Dash is coming up through the Goose Chase App. Register for the event and use the app to find challenges set up throughout Fridley's park system.

Received a grant agreement with Great River Greening to remove invasive garlic mustard plants at SNC.

USDA Wildlife Services removed 11 deer within the city.

Summer camps at SNC are very popular and registration is full for the camps right now and we are working off a wait list.

11. Recreation Highlights

Spring programs are up and running resulting in good enrollments in both youth and adult programs.

Recreation in a Box – residents can order activity kits to do at home and this is also popular.

Summer Youth and Summer Rocks program registration is open.

Positions for hiring summer help closed on April 2. We are looking for instructor and group leaders.

Finding your Fun in Fridley pop up tents received specific feedback on park master plan concepts.

The Rec and Roll new recreation truck will go into different parks this summer providing activities for people to do in their neighborhood parks.

Adjournment

MOTION by Commissioner Larson to Adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Graham. The MOTION PASSED unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Krista Peterson,
Recording Secretary