

**City of Woodbury
Woodbury City Hall
8301 Valley Creek Road
Woodbury, MN 55125
651-714-3583**

**Minutes of
Parks and Natural Resources Commission Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 2, 2023**

Commission Members Present: Timothy Brewington, II, Anna Doherty, Charles Eckberg, Bruce Montgomery (Co-chair), Deborah Musser (Chair), Edward Myatt, Wallace Wadd, Noah Yehalashet

Commission Member(s) Virtual: None

Commission Member(s) Absent: None

Councilmember: Councilmember Kimberly Wilson

Staff Present: Josh Kinney, Parks Planner
Belinda Reed, Recording Secretary
Reed Smidt, Recreation Manager
Jennifer McLoughlin, Environmental Resources Mgr.

Staff Virtual: Jodi Sauro, Parks and Recreation Coordinator

1. Call to Order

Chair Musser called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Open Forum

In-person and virtual

3. Action Items

A. April 4, 2023, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Meeting Minutes

Chair Musser asked for the approval of the Minutes of the April 4, 2023, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Commission.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Montgomery, seconded by Commissioner Myatt, to approve the April 4, 2023, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Minutes.

Vote: In favor All
Against None
Absent None

4. Parks & Recreation Department 2022 Annual Report– Memorandum No. 23 – 15

Ms. Okada noted that Parks and Recreation Coordinator, Jodi Sauro, gathered information from the department's four divisions: Recreation, Central Park, Eagle Valley Golf Course (EVGC), and M

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Health Fairview Sports Center (MHFVSC), to prepare the 2022 annual report which is available on the city's website: [2022 Parks and Recreation Annual Report](#).

Ms. Sauro, noting that 2022 was the first full year post COVID-19, and highlighted the year's many successes and accomplishments, including the addition of four new parks to the Woodbury park system: Arbor Ridge, Briarcroft, Bridlewood Farms and Highcroft, listed playground replacements, new recreation programs including adaptive programming, numbers of participants in programs, visits to Central Park's Lookout Ridge Indoor Playground, rounds of golf played at EVGC, as well as visitors to MHFVSC.

Awards and honors received by the department included being voted "Best Place for Kids' Activities" by the Woodbury Magazine in 2022, and a Minnesota Recreation and Parks Association Award of Excellence for Partnerships, for the Woodbury Coin Quest – Winter Medallion Hunt.

Also highlighted in the report are the community businesses and organizations that partner with the department by sponsoring and supporting events and programs throughout the year.

The Commissioners thanked the staff for the report and comments included being impressed with the wide scope of programs, as well as appreciation of the innovative new programs and number of adult sports teams.

Mr. Smidt noted that Woodbury has a history of being the east metro hub for adult athletics with established leagues that continue to do well each year.

5. Environmental Stewardship Strategic Initiative Consultant and Budget Amendment Review and Recommendation – Memorandum No. 23 – 16

Environmental Resources Manager, Jennifer McLoughlin, noted that the Commissioners had previously reviewed the Project Scope, which had been prepared by staff in preparation for finalizing and issuing the Request for Proposal (RFP), at the February 7, PNRC meeting. The RFP was subsequently issued to nine consultant firms on March 15, resulting in three proposals being submitted to the city. Staff and the project team, including the PNRC Chair and City Administrator, met to review the three proposals, with the firm of paleBLUEdot chosen.

Ms. Okada noted that there were a number of synergies with paleBLUEdot, relating to the strategic initiative and that the consultant's in-house Equity Engagement Lead aligned very well with the Community Engagement Plan with an equity lens, that was previously approved by the City Council. Commissioners noted the importance of the community engagement piece in order to get community buy-in for the work to be successful.

With regard to the public engagement, it was noted that paleBLUEdot recommends that the city use a project team, which would be led by Ms. McLoughlin, who will also be the staff liaison to the consultant.

A discussion ensued with regard to how future plan implementation may work. Ms. Okada noted that evaluations will be part of the metric when looking at a menu of options and opportunities, taking into account, as with all projects, cost impacts, staff time and resources, various decision points to determine whether steps may or may not require continued consultant support.

Ms. Okada noted staff is seeking affirmation from the Commission as to whether the Project Scope meets the intention of the strategic initiative and a specific motion to make a recommendation that Council consider a budget amendment to facilitate the contract.

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The PNRC reviewed the proposal noting that it matches the scope, and recommended the City Council approve the \$102,000 budget amendment necessary to contract with paleBLUEdot.

Chair Musser asked if someone would like to move to approve the PNRC recommendation that the City Council approve the necessary budget amendment in the amount of \$102,000, necessary to execute the contract with paleBLUEdot, plus a small contingency and supplies needed to facilitate the initiative – Memorandum No. 23 – 16.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Wadd, seconded by Commissioner Brewington, to move to approve the PNRC recommendation that the City Council approve the necessary budget amendment in the amount of \$102,000, necessary to execute the contract with paleBLUEdot, plus a small contingency and supplies needed to facilitate the initiative – Memorandum No. 23 – 16,

Vote: In favor All
Against None
Absent None

6. Community-wide Recreation Program Evaluation – Memorandum No. 23 – 17

Ms. Okada noted that while recreation programming is very subjective, lots of work has gone into this study in order to identify how recreation has been facilitated by not only the city, but by many of the private or public organizations, which were included in the study, in order to identify the gaps in programming opportunities in the community that best fit the mission of the Recreation Division.

Recreation Manager, Reed Smidt, noted that the study began mid-year 2021, and was completed at the end of 2022. Mr. Smidt presented details about how the study was conducted as well as the resulting recommendations. It was noted that staff outlined questions in the memorandum to obtain the Commissioner's feedback and questions that will help staff prioritize potential objectives going forward.

Discussion ensued with regard to addressing gaps and needs of the community including:

- Facilities in the community for adults and seniors
- Spaces for groups to meet
- Programs targeted for under-represented community members to meet their needs
- Engaging with the community in order to connecting agencies to meet specific needs

It was noted that staff looks at high quality programs that can utilize the city's facilities and resources; both of which are unique to the community.

Mr. Smidt noted that while looking at new or specialty programs to add, staff relies on connections in order to identify instructors. For example, sports such as fencing, and cricket may require specialized instruction.

Ms. Okada noted that programs have bell curves; they grow, peak and fall. Sometimes program offerings are strategic, for instance, offering a program every other year may increase participation. While the city's sports program offerings are more introductory, the athletic associations offer more intermediate sports programming for in-house or more competitive travelling teams.

Mr. Smidt noted that growth in adaptive program offerings has resulted in a full page of adaptive programming in the summer brochure for 2023.

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Discussion ensued regarding programming for different abilities noting that adaptive focus programming and inclusion programming are not the same.

Ms. Okada noted that teen programming can be a challenge which most agencies struggle with, whether providing the resources that teens desire in order to encourage healthy social connections, but without the unwanted benefit of too much oversight.

Mr. Smidt noted special events such as One Woodbury, which is an event being organized with the Woodbury Community Foundation, scheduled for September 30, 2023, and is intended to bring community members together to celebrate differences and make new connections.

Ms. Okada noted that with neighborhoods, malls and area churches now providing spring egg hunts, ending the Recreation Division's spring egg hunt is an example of staff making adjustments to programming and redirecting resources and funds to other programs.

Mr. Smidt noted the Woodbury Wolves adult cricket team leadership, is motivated to bring the sport of cricket to Woodbury residents. To accommodate this sport, a dedicated cricket pitch, which is the size of two soccer fields, is being added at the city's Courtly fields.

It was noted that the sport of pickle ball has begun being offered in schools and the city offered youth pickle ball lessons for the first time this summer. A discussion ensued with regard to School District 833 Community Education offerings. Mr. Smidt noted staff connects with the school district a couple times each year, to prevent overlapping programs.

Mr. Smidt noted the seasonal Recreation brochure is issued 3-times per year and delivered to every Woodbury resident and business, as well as posting the [current brochure](#) on the city's website.

With regard to new residents, the city hosts a new resident event at M Health Fairview Sports Center each year. The newest residents receive a postcard about the yearly event for a couple years running.

A discussion ensued with regard to the Recreation scholarship program currently offered to families with free and reduced lunch, or for individuals without school age children, qualification is determined using a federal tax return.

The Commissioners expressed an interest in receiving information on One Woodbury, the Woodbury Wolves Cricket Club, tournament dates, etc.

Suggestions were made in ways to identify and communicate with new residents, including reaching out to area realtors and title companies with the Recreation brochure. It was noted that reaching new renters is more challenging. It was suggested that the city website have a "new resident" page with everything a new resident might need to know about the living in the city. It was also suggested that the new resident event information be added to resident water bills or by way of a postcard.

7. Discussion Items¹

¹ Discussion and updates are intended to be informational or of brief inquiry. More substantial discussion of matter under status updates and miscellaneous should be scheduled for a future agenda.

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A. Current Projects – Status Update – Josh Kinney provided the 2023 project review of current park projects, including developing and adding new parks in the park system, renovation projects in existing parks such as court replacements, repaving trails, painting facilities, park signage, and restroom restorations.

Ms. Okada noted information on many projects is available on the city’s “[Park Projects](#)” website page.

B Central Park Renovation Project – Ms. Okada noted that the Commissioners were previously provided the most recent PowerPoint presentation.

C. Environmental Stewardship Strategic Initiative – Ms. Okada noted the budget amendment is scheduled to be on the May 24, City Council meeting agenda.

8. Monthly Update – Memorandum No. 23 – 18

Ms. Okada noted the Monthly Update continues to highlight the various division activities.

9. Council Report – Councilmember Wilson

Councilmember Wilson noted that a lawn and watering policy change was approved at the Council’s April 26, meeting. Councilmember Wilson also shared some upcoming city events, including the Woodbury Business Celebration on May 4, starting at 7:30 a.m., being held in the Central Park Amphitheater, the Hasenbank seeding event on May 16, from 4-6 p.m., and the Memorial Day ceremony on Monday, May 29, 11 a.m., at the Woodbury Lion’s Veterans Memorial on the City Hall Campus. The May City Council meetings are scheduled for May 10 and 24, with a workshop scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on May 17.

10. Announcements/Miscellaneous

There was consensus for staff to schedule a tour of the Seasons Park storm water filter, immediately prior to the June 6, PNRC meeting.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Belinda Reed

Belinda Reed
Administrative Assistant

Approved by the Parks and Natural Resources Commission on June 6, 2023.