

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, Sept. 12, 2023

Commission Members Present: Timothy Brewington, II, Anna Doherty, Charles Eckberg, Deborah Musser (*Chair*), Edward Myatt

Commission Member(s) Virtual: None

Commission Member(s) Absent: Bruce Montgomery, Wallace Wadd, Noah Yehalashet

Councilmember: Steve Morris

Staff Present: Michelle Okada, Director Parks and Recreation
Josh Kinney, Parks Planner
Belinda Reed, Recording Secretary
Reed Smidt, Recreation Manager
Searles, Eric, Asst. Community Development Dir. /City Planner

Staff Virtual: Jodi Sauro, Parks and Recreation Coordinator

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Musser called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. **Open Forum**

In-person and virtual

3. **Action Items**

A. **June 6, 2023, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Meeting Minutes**

Chair Musser asked for the approval of the Minutes of the June 6, 2023, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Commission.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Myatt, seconded by Commissioner Eckberg, to approve the June 6, 2023, Parks and Natural Resources Commission Minutes.

Vote: In favor All
Against None
Absent Commissioners Montgomery, Wadd, Yehalashet

4. **Community Development/Planning Update – Memorandum No. 23 – 24**

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Ms. Okada noted that each year Community Development provides the PNRC with a development update. Ms. Okada introduced Assistant Community Development Director/City Planner, Eric Searles.

Mr. Searles highlighted new single family and townhome residential developments, along with the commercial activity located in Woodbury, including the south of Dale Road multi-year plan, south of Bailey Road, east of Woodbury Drive at Dale Road, and northeast Woodbury, along with future development areas estimated for 2024-2030. Mr. Searles also highlighted the park components and storm water locations in each of the areas reviewed.

It was noted that the City of Woodbury's policy goal is to provide 50 percent single-family and 50 percent multiple-family housing stock. Mr. Searles shared that as a result of the current shortage of housing inventory, a little over 30 percent of all housing units being sold are new construction.

With regard to future development and growth management, Mr. Searles noted that in July, the City Council made changes to growth management that will delay the start of some development in some areas of the city, until the water treatment plant is operational. The City Council also directed staff to conduct master plans in advance of the next phase opening.

Mr. Searles noted priority park acquisition parcels and highlighted five sites in Woodbury for future development activity, which can be attributed to the investment in the Gold Line.

5. Fee Assistance Policy – Memorandum No. 23 – 25

Mr. Smidt noted that as a result of recent State of Minnesota legislation, that provides free lunch to all Minnesota school-age students, the City's Council Directive PKREC-7.2 Fee Assistance Policy, requires an adjustment.

The city's Policy, last updated in March 2020, utilizes the free and reduced lunch letter, provided to the applicant by the local school district, to determine eligibility for the city's fee assistance for recreation programs. For non-student applicants, the last filed federal tax return is used to determine eligibility, using a sliding scale calculated off of the median income level for the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

Mr. Smidt also noted that for special circumstances or hardships, the application is reviewed by the Recreation Manager and Parks and Recreation Director.

In revisiting the policy to make the necessary adjustments, suggested changes include removing the free and reduced lunch language and utilizing the HUD yearly adjusted income guidelines and/or most recently filed federal tax return with the goal to keep the policy simple and easy to use.

The Commissioners were asked for their input and feedback or questions prior to the updated policy being presented to the City Council for their consideration and approval.

It was noted that the Fee Assistance Policy and application are on the city's website; Recreation registration page, and the policy is shared with various organizations that interact with residents throughout the community including, Woodbury Public Safety, which have contact with youth, and SoWashCo CARES.

Commissioners commented on keeping the application form simple.

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There was consensus among the Commissioners to align the policy and application with a name change: "Recreation Program Scholarship" rather than "Fee Assistance," and to make the necessary changes, as outlined by staff, and provide the recommendation to the City Council for their consideration.

6. Refund and Cancellation Policy – Memorandum No. 23 – 26

Mr. Smidt providing background information on the purpose of the Administrative Directive, PKREC-6.2, pertaining to refunds and cancellations that take place in the normal course of business in the department, noting the City Administrator ultimately signs off on these types of policies.

Mr. Smidt highlighted the suggested proposed changes to the policy including: removal of household program credits, which pose administrative issues as a household may forget they have a credit or the household may relocate outside the community without a forwarding address. By law, staff is obligated to attempt to locate the household when a refund is available. It was noted that if the household is not located, the credit funds are then paid out to the State of Minnesota.

Another change proposed relates to cancellation timeframes by changing the current ten (10) business days' notice, to fourteen (14) days' notice, which eliminates any confusion with weekdays and weekends (Saturday and Sunday), as well as holidays.

It was noted that if the credit card used for an initial registration transaction has expired, refunds are then processed by check through the Finance Department. Also, if the transaction was processed six (6) months prior, as is the case with some facility reservations, or if the credit card has expired, then the refund will be processed by check through the Finance Department.

Another change proposed relates to facility reservations by changing the notice period to forty-five (45) days. Mr. Smidt noted that the current thirty (30) days' notice makes it difficult to book another reservation as many users plan their events, such as birthday parties, anniversaries, graduations, etc., more than thirty (30) days in advance, which limits user availability and results in lost revenue when a cancellation occurs.

Specific cancellation information being added will also make it easier for residents to find information pertaining to Eagle Valley Golf Course and M Health Fairview Sports Center.

Mr. Smidt noted that the city is charged a fee for every transaction, including cancellations. To avoid Woodbury's general taxpayer subsidizing cancellation fees, a tiered administrative fee is charged for processing cancellations, based on the original program fee charged or facility rental fee.

The Commissioners were in consensus with the suggested changes to the Administrative Directive – Refunds and Cancellation Policy.

7. Mid-year Budget Review – Memorandum No. 23 – 27

Ms. Okada noted that Parks and Recreation Coordinator, Jodi Sauro, worked with the division managers on the mid-year budget review.

Ms. Sauro highlighted the revenue and expenditure analysis update, by division, through July 2023, noting that each division is doing well.

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Ms. Sauro noted that the Recreation Division, comprised of Central Park, Lookout Ridge Indoor Playground (LOR), park facility rentals, as well as outdoor athletic fields, 2022 highlights included overall revenue being ahead of the same period the previous year, while percentage of expenditures has been held down.

With the sport of pickleball continuing to soar in popularity, staff added tournament opportunities in 2023, which were very well received by the pickleball community. Woodbury continues to add pickleball courts: Woodbury park system will have 19 pickleball courts available by the end of 2023.

Ms. Okada noted that the Community Garden plots, in partnership with Woodbury Thrives, are at capacity.

It was noted that as a seasonal enterprise, Eagle Valley Golf Course's (EVGC) mid-year numbers represent a snapshot in time, and do not reflect the full complement of the remainder of the season. Golf lessons filled along with most corresponding waitlists. Through a partnership with First Tee Minnesota, additional practice mats are being added to the practice range.

Ms. Sauro noted that the M Health Fairview Sports Center (MHFVSC) indoor ice and field house prime use time period is August through the end of the year. Staff's decision to keep the walking and open program times consistent for users, has resulted in increased visits to the facility.

In comparing the operating revenue less operating expenses, Ms. Sauro noted that in 2021, programs were limited and there were no rentals or concessions happening until August of that year, while expenses were minimized as well. During 2022 and into 2023, expenditures and revenue have been more consistent.

Total visitors at the MHFVSC reflects all open programs, high school games, skating competition, outdoor rink, tournaments, events and all the ice and field hours sold.

Ms. Okada shared how staff budgets for closer to the minimum and not the maximum, allowing for adjustments to be made throughout the course of the year, noting that surplus in revenue occurs when minimums are exceeded.

Ms. Okada noted that weather can play a major role in estimating the number of rounds at EVGC.

A discussion ensued with regard to increasing field facilities and adding another ice sheet at MHFVSC. Ms. Okada noted that staff work closely with all the athletic associations, hockey association and figure skating club. While the hockey community purchases an estimated 1,400 hours of ice outside of Woodbury each year, even if a third sheet of ice were added in Woodbury, the hockey club would still need to purchase additional ice hours outside the community.

Ms. Okada noted that as the city continue to build infrastructure, there are going to be things that are stretched; however, it is important to make sure what we do build is going to meet the needs of the community.

It was noted by the Commission that they now have a good understanding of where we are with regard to facilities.

8. Hasenbank Park Public Art Update – Memorandum No. 23 – 28

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Mr. Kinney highlighted the ongoing city partnership with South Washington County Watershed District (SWWD) noting that the Hasenbank Park public art concept was originally reviewed by the PNRC in December 2022, followed by approval in March 2023.

Mr. Kinney shared conceptual depictions of the Hasenbank Park planned art installations noting that construction had begun with completion in the summer of 2024.

The installations were described as being very specific, conceptually identifying the themes to be explored in the park with depressions and basins formed to depict how the water works in the landscape. Each of the installations will include an interpretation panel, text or QR code, examining the artist's intent for the sculpture. One of the artists uses a dialogue between pipes and water with the use of the pipe as an anthropomorphize form, like a tree. The other artist integrates water flow with the path.

Commissioners were delighted with the approach being taken with art to be displayed in the parks noting the concepts look great.

9. Copper Hills Park Project Concept Plan Approval – Memorandum No. 23 – 29

Ms. Okada noted that the Copper Hills Park project was previously reviewed by the Commission at the June 6, meeting, at which time there was consensus among the Commissioners that the plan was proceeding in the right direction and to move the plan forward for approval as the concept plan would serve the area well.

Mr. Kinney noted staff moved forward through the design process for construction to begin in May, 2024.

Chair Musser asked for the approval of the Copper Hills Park Concept Plan – Memorandum No. 23 - 29.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Myatt, seconded by Commissioner Doherty, to approve the Copper Hills Park Concept Plan – Memorandum No. 23 - 29.

Vote: In favor All
Against None
Absent Commissioners Montgomery, Wadd, Yehalashet

10. Discussion Items¹

A. Current Projects – Status Update – “[Park Projects](#)” website page.

Ms. Okada noted most projects, including Conifer Glen, Pondview, Westview and Turnberry, are reaching completion; however, supply chain issues can extend project completion dates.

B Central Park Renovation Project –

Ms. Okada noted Central Park's final concept and budget were brought to the City Council in July, with approval for staff to move it forward. Staff is in the process of one last pre-construction cost

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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estimate. The project bid has not been finalized and there may be some alternates as some of the final details may tip costs one way or another. Ms. Okada noted it is anticipated that final renderings will be ready to be reviewed in the next couple of weeks.

Ms. Okada noted that during the Central Park indoor playground community engagement in August, seven different play items were chosen. The results will be provided to the vendor to confirm the items will fit in the playground container and if any additional components could possibility be included.

C. Environmental Stewardship Strategic Initiative Update –

The city is seeking community input and perspective on the future of environmental stewardship in Woodbury. The [Woodbury Environmental Stewardship Questionnaire](#) is online now. The goal is to get a number of residents involved with a variety of voices to determine objectives and priorities. The consultant is conducting research and reviewing our policies and ordinances that tie into the strategic initiative, to be synthesized and analyzed and brought back to us. The PNRC will continue to receive monthly touch points as staff continues to work in the background.

11. Monthly Update – Memorandum No. 23 – 22

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

12. Council Report – Councilmember Morris

Councilmember Morris noted upcoming Council meetings and workshops along with other community events included in the listing below.

13. /14. Announcements/Miscellaneous

- City Council Budget Workshop, Wednesday, Sept. 13, 4 p.m., in the Education Training Center, Public Safety Building, 2100 Radio Drive.
- Monday, Sept. 18, Development Tour
- Big Truck Day, Saturday, Sept. 23, 9 a.m.-noon, Central Park
- “One Woodbury” Saturday, Sept. 30, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Ojibway Park (rain or shine)

Mr. Smidt highlighted the Recreation fall 2023 program brochure, noting the cover photo highlights a youth holding the large bass he caught at one of the summer fishing camps held at Carver Lake Park.

Mr. Smidt noted that the most recent Carver Lake Park Off-road Cycling Trail expansion (jump trail) was completed in August.

Discussion took place with regard to holding the October 3, PNRC meeting at the Eagle Valley Golf Course Club House, with a tour of the facility held at 6:30 p.m., prior to the 7:00 p.m. meeting. Staff will inquiry if the facility is available.

15. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

Belinda Reed

Belinda J. Reed
Administrative Assistant

Approved by the Parks and Natural Resources Commission on November 14, 2023.