



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes March 13, 2024

Harrison Community Center



I. Call Meeting to Order

President Demmer called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: Amanda Crosby, David Demmer, Kala Pedersen, Terrance Lovejoy, Hailey Sigafus, Sarah Beehler, Josie LaPorte, Azrin Awal – City Council Liaison, Stephanie Williams – ISD 709 School Board Liaison

Not Present: Tjaard Breeuwer, Dave Cizmas, Ashley Grimm – St. Louis County Commissioner

III. E-Board Secretary Election

President Demmer amended the order of the agenda to add E-Board Secretary Election.

A. E-Board Secretary Election (Action Requested)

Pedersen nominated LaPorte for the Secretary seat on the E-Board. Crosby second. Unanimously approved. Motion carries.

IV. Approval of the February 14 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Pedersen motioned to approve the February 14 meeting minutes. Commissioner Sigafus second. Unanimously approved. Motion carries.

V. Presentations

A. Duluth Area Pickleball Association (Informational) Jessica Thiel

Lovejoy questioned if the UMD fieldhouse has Pickleball courts. Thiel stated that she believes so, but that is not a part of DAPA. Stated that many college students play at Wheeler.

Lovejoy questioned how long a patching would last vs. a redo of the Woodland Courts. Thiel stated that the patch would be good for around 5 years. Manager Peterson stated that there are underlying foundational issues at Woodland which would make any improvements to the court temporary until those issues are addressed.

Pedersen questioned how to start playing Pickleball as a beginner. Thiel stated that open play is for people to show up and play, although others already know how to play. Stated that DAPA sometimes hosts Learn to Play events occasionally, and may host some this summer.

Williams questioned if there are options for kids to play Pickleball. Thiel stated that last year DAPA partnered with Parks and Recreation to host youth Pickleball programs. Stated that parents often bring their children to the courts to play. Manager Peterson stated that Parks and Recreation offered a family Pickleball program at Washington Center. Questioned if there has been outreach to the schools. Thiel stated that DAPA would be interested in pursuing youth opportunities.

Williams questioned how someone can become a member. Thiel stated that there is a sign up on their website, and there is a \$25 annual fee.

Demmer questioned if the demand in Duluth exceeds what is available for facilities. Thiel stated that it can be a long wait for a court at open play. Stated that finding court time in winter is a challenge, since indoor



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spaces are also used by other athletic groups.

Demmer questioned if DAPA is involved in the AVRI indoor task force. Manager Peterson stated that there is currently not a DAPA representative on the task force. Stated that there will be opportunities for input and involvement on both indoor and outdoor facilities in upcoming planning processes.

Demmer questioned what the ideal surface is for Pickleball. Thiel stated that an ideal surface would be asphalt or concrete with an acrylic seal coating. Questioned how many courts in Duluth have this surface. Manager Peterson stated that the four courts at Wheeler are coated, the courts at other locations are concrete. Stated that the surface at GND Rec could be an option for Pickleball in the future.

B. Norton Park (Informational) Cliff Knettel, Assistant Manager

Lovejoy questioned if part of the plan includes additional connections to trails or the zoo. Knettel stated that this neighborhood is uniquely isolated from the community and other recreational amenities. Stated that Grand Ave is a barrier for access as well. Stated that the plan may not specifically address connections but we are always looking to improve connections.

Lovejoy questioned if the 2012 flooding caused some issues in this park that led to this planning process. Knettel stated that there was a need to invest in western Duluth parks. Stated that each neighborhood park received a small amount of money, which helped some neighborhoods more than others. Stated that this current planning process is based on funding available now.

Councilor Awal questioned if parks are insured in case of floods or other natural events. Director Filby Williams stated that the City is self-ensured. Stated that park plans are designed to make parks more resilient in the face of natural disasters.

Councilor Awal questioned if there is a portion of the budget set aside for incidental and emergency issues. Manager Peterson stated that there is a small amount of funds set aside. Stated that more often staff catalog and calculate disaster costs and submit those for disaster relief dollars from the state.

Demmer questioned if sidewalks are a part of this project. Knettel stated that there is a partial sidewalk along one side of the park. Stated that 81st Avenue is slated for construction later this year or next, so there are opportunities to coordinate with Engineering for access and transportation issues at this location.

Demmer questioned if replacing the building is a possibility in the future. Knettel stated that the neighborhood recognize the structural issues with the building. Stated that the City is investing in specific park buildings, rather than investing in many small buildings across the park system. Peterson stated that the funds available will in large part determine what is possible at this location, along with neighborhood priorities.

VI. Commissioner Committees

Administrative (E-Board) meeting date: Thursday, April 4 at noon, Portman Community Center
David Demmer, Kala Pedersen [Jessica Peterson, Bridget Erickson]

VII. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Commissioner Pedersen provided an update from the AVRI indoor task force.

VIII. New Business



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IX. Old Business

X. Division Report

Demmer questioned if any programming changes happened due to early spring weather, specifically the golf course. Manager Peterson stated that some programs are opening early, including the Enger Golf Course driving range. Stated that there is the potential for some opening and closing over the next couple of weeks with fluctuating temperatures. Stated that baseball has already been played at Wade Stadium.

XI. Public Comment

XII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:07 pm.

XIII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 10 at 5:00 p.m., Harrison Community Center.