

RAMSEY COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 12, 2022 – 6:00 PM

Parks Administrative Building
2015 Van Dyke Street in Maplewood Minnesota

Commission Members In-Attendance: Chair - Gregory Williams (AL), Leah Shepard (AL), District 1- Vacant, Vice chair - Brian Tempas (3), Dr. Tamara Mattison (4), Savannah Lane (5), Snowdon Herr (6)

Not In-Attendance: Jordan Nelson (2), Candy Petersen (7)

Staff: Scott Yonke: Director of Planning and Development, Kenneth Pelto: Program Specialist, Thony Thao: Recreation Services Supervisor, Kristopher Lencowski: Director of Parks & Trails, Mark McCabe: Ramsey County Parks Director, Martha Flynn: Little Bellas Representative

Approve October 12, 2022, Meeting Minutes and November 9, 2022, Agenda

Summer Programs/Facilities Recap & Winter Recreation Update: Ken Pelto & Thony Thao

Ken Pelto reported that in the summer of 2022 programs were offered in all Regional Parks as well as two County Parks, Lake McCarrons, and Beaver Lake. Since Park workers are busy running the program, only anecdotal information on diversity can be obtained. In light of this, Ken feels confident that there was growth in number of participants and diversity of those participants especially with the August archery program.

In 2021 Parks purchased a bike fleet with a SHIP grant and held events in 2022 at Keller Regional Park, Battle Creek Regional Park, McCarrons County Park, Vadnais Snail Lake Regional Park, Shoreview and North St. Paul Libraries. Parks held 31 Bike events in 2022 which is up from 24 events in 2021. This equates to 138 hours of programming in 2022 verses 96 hours programing in 2021. Parks served 620 riders in 2022 compared to 165 in 2021. All that is required by the renter is that an ID is held as collateral and riders are also given a lock to use.

The archery program also experienced significant growth. In 2021, 8 events totaling 16 hours were offered while in 2022, 18 events totaling 36 hours with participants growing from 250 to 396 were offered. The first hour was by sign-up only and the second hour was drop-in. This is one of the most safety aware events that Ramsey County Parks conducts, and it differs in other sports in that it promotes calm and control over speed and reaction. The events were held at the Keller Archery Range.

Continued to offer free youth fishing (under 16 per DNR rules) at McCarrons County Park, Keller Regional Park and Beaver Lake County Park. All equipment and basic instructions were provided. Events were increased in 2022 from 10 to 15, with hours increasing from 15 to 22.5, and participants increasing from 98 to 171 participants.

Continued Ramsey County Library collaboration of and added Storytimes in the Parks. Two new programs were launched, Books & Bikes and Poetry Walk at Snail Lake Regional Park. In total there were 13 events with about 36 attendees at each event.

Finally, both summer staff were youth of color. Parks is currently participating in a county program called the "Public Sector Academy" in which 3 sets of interns rotate between Parks, Public Works, and Property Management. Thus far all participants have been diverse youth.

Winter Recreation Area Programming has ordered skis and is working to scheduling skiing opportunities with 2 elementary schools and afterschool programs. Will also be exploring targeting high density housing to offer skiing opportunities for families.

Thony Thao has been working on the High School side of things to seed ski clubs at those schools that do not have them. The winter recreation area passes will be available online for purchase Friday, October 14th, 2022. One large shift in scheduling Cross County ski (XC) practices is that there is now just an open time frame from 3:00pm to 6:00pm to match what other lobbies associated with the shared winter recreation pass are doing. Also, Parks is no longer charging a season practice fee but rather having the students purchase a Student All Access Pass, which is half the price of a regular all access pass (\$40.00). There will be free passes offered through outreach programs and in the future libraries.

Group classes/training programs will have a one-time annual fee of \$320.00 to schedule a season's training. Hiring two Park Services Coordinators that will work from 3pm - 8pm on weekdays and 10am - 6pm on weekends to assist the flow of space use at Battle Creek Recreation Center.

Currently Parks is involved with St. Paul Public Schools (Central, Highland, Como) more specifically those neighboring schools and a few from Minneapolis. Johnson and Harding High schools do not yet have XC ski programs.

Webpage is up, <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/parks-recreation/programs-activities/activities/cross-country-skiing> and active. This is in partnership with St. Paul, and they are working to update those webpages. *Gregory Williams discussed the potential of winter parks reservation use.*

Thony reviewed the Summer Parks and Aquatics Recap presentation.

- Incredibly, an increase of reservations over 2021 (1426 to 1820).
- More survey responses showed a slight decrease in overall ratings.
 - Comments included how to attract more diverse users.
- BattleCreek WaterWorks revenue down from 2021 mainly due to less-than-ideal weather on high traffic days.
 - There are significant challenges to maintenance of this aging facility.
 - Working on new concept designs and future programming for things like swim classes.
 - Summer staff and Park Aides (counters) diversity was maintained while understaffed.
- Unable to recruit enough guards to even guard the one beach that was budgeted for.
 - All beaches and pools were faced with lifeguard staffing.
 - *Savannah Lane asked about certifications and youth program partnerships.*
 - Currently there is not an under 16-year-old program, but this is being explored as well as other innovative ways to recruit.
 - Still posted swim buoys at most beaches and keep an eye on those beaches that had only boat buoys out.

Bruce Vento Trail Project Update: Scott Yonke

Scott gave some history of the 13-mile corridor that stretches from downtown St. Paul to County Road J with only about 50% constructed. The original master plan was done in 1993 and covered mainly St. Paul to Buerkle Road because of the Railway decommissioning. Currently there is 7 continuous miles constructed. In 2014-2016 a Preliminary Study was conducted for the remaining segments. Attached are the 2 remaining sections and links to their current project status and Feasibility studies as well as the Master Plan Amendment done for the whole Bruce Vento Regional Trail. This trail is a major part of the Regional Bike Trail Network as well as part of a National Route, US Bike Trail 41 that goes from St. Paul to the Canadian Border.

[Buerkle Road to Hoffman/Hwy 61](#) (Phase 1)

[Whitaker Street to County Road J](#) (Phase 2)

- Over 20 potential corridors were studied with area partners and public engagement.

- The preferred route was determined through this method came back with highest public approval.
- In May 2021, the updated Master Plan was adopted by the Ramsey County Commissioners and Adopted by the Metropolitan Council in August 2021.
- With Rush line (Purple Line) no longer being in White Bear Lake the Phase 1 extension has been updated.
- Phase 1 has 2 easements with the Metropolitan Council sanitary sewer.

Scott reviewed route specifications and partnerships with private high density housing projects. Phase 2 Public Engagement plan was completed as part of the Preliminary design with 3 rounds of engagement and 2 online surveys as well as completion of the GARE worksheet. All information will be integrated into the online reporting. The preferred alignment scenario is from Lincoln Ave to Bald Eagle is 2-way, first section between Bald Eagle Ave and park is 2way and everything north of that one-way with things left to flush out. Scott reviewed the cost of one-way verse two-way projects and the impacts each type of project has on the placement.

Next steps are additional agency engagements in which these outcomes will be presented as well as additional community engagement since there is definite mixed support, Utility & railroad coordination, and finally funding. Parks submitted a 2022 Regional Solicitation application for \$4 million but still seeking Federal funds as well. Parks received a federal Community Project Grant of \$1.3 million through Betty McCollum's office with a local match making it about \$2.6 million to complete the last 10% design on Phase 1 and will continue analysis and design on Phase 2.

Greg commented on the extensive community engagement and feels it should be a model for other projects.

Little Bellas Mountain Bike Program: Martha Flynn

Martha thanked Ramsey County such wonderful trails. Little Bellas would like to see more beginner and intermediate trails built at Battle creek which would allow for more programming. Participants come from a broad area around the twin cities which is typical for a new program. As the program continues, more participants are drawn in locally due to visibility. Half the participants are novice bikers and the majority report feeling more comfortable riding outside and will ride their bike more. Mentors and girls also focus on healthy relationship with food and snack together. 25% participants identify as having a mental health condition. Martha shared Amara's story with Little Bellas. Amara was loaned a bike and given a scholarship for the whole program. She learned to ride a bike that year and struggled in the past with riding and even learning to turn around. Amara was a determined rider with a great attitude the whole season. Little Bellas was able to secure a donated bike for her to keep as her own.

Bryan Shirley asked how many other locations, 3 other locations but this is the first urban location.

Commission Chair Update:

Greg played a video for the Parks Commission highlighting artificial obstacles called Mountain Bike Toys and different staff members and community members demonstrating their use. These features are moveable and durable and add to the park experience.

Commission Member Update:

Savannah wanted to discuss moving back to Robert's Rules of Order to help maintain meeting continuity and efficiency. Greg and Mark agreed and commented that this meeting was a bit more informal due to a few issues at the start.

Director Update:

Mark reported that he attended the National Parks and Recreation Conference in Phoenix Arizona. Appreciated the ability to discuss innovative programming and shared challenges such as drone use and lifeguard staffing shortages. Mark was able to spend time exploring advancing equity and Community engagement

Pigs' Eye Island Building project has encountered opposition from a resident concerned about detrimental environmental impact of the project. The project has been vetted by the EPA, DNR and US Army Corp of Engineers. The resident also questioned the projects determination of land jurisdiction and hence the City's authorities to stop the project. It will be back before the city council in 2 weeks. *Greg asked if this could be moved to the next meeting for further discussion.* Scott updated that the US Army Corp of Engineers have started the island building from North to south and are about 35% complete with the island building phase. By December all 6 islands will be placed.

Meeting ended at 8:00pm

Next Meeting: November 9, 2022