

PARKS AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEEMEETING
April 18, 2024
MINUTES

The April 18, 2024, meeting of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee was called to order in city hall at 6:32 p.m.

Attendees: Council Members Justin McCarthy and Kathy Weier, Committee Members Zachary Michalk, Jennifer Arsenault, Mary Sue Simmons, Amy Hulett, and Alan Mitchell.

Others: Nick and Sarah Nephew. Barton Winter arrived at 6:50.

Agenda. The agenda was adopted as proposed.

Public Forum. Nick Nephew stated that he was the President of the Birchwood Dock Association. He reported that everything with installation of the docks this spring went well. He brought to the Committee's attention a concern about the condition of the access path to Ash Beach. Nephew said that access to the beach was difficult, it was steep and rocky, and some of the wooden steps were deteriorating. He showed a recent photo of the path. In response to a question about what needs to be done, Nephew stated that some of the steps need to be replaced and the dirt part of the path needed leveling. Simmons responded that a staff person from the Rice Creek Watershed District was coming out to inspect some of the beaches, perhaps as early as next week, and we could get his ideas for improvement. The Committee noted that the MN Department of Natural Resources might need to be involved if work on the beach was required near the lake. Arsenault volunteered to inspect the beach and observe the condition of the path. The Committee discussed that access to Birch Beach and Dellwood Beach was in good condition, although Dellwood needed a little work removing weeds. Elm Beach will be discussed later under a separate agenda item. The Committee noted that issues with improving the beaches could be addressed at the city-wide Clean Up Day, scheduled for Saturday April 27. McCarthy remarked that there was some money available for the purchase of a couple landscape timbers for the steps.

The Committee discussed the fact that money in the Special Revenue Fund maintained by the City might be used for improvement of the beaches and other park improvements. There is presently about \$10,800 in the Fund as of April 2 according to the Treasurer's Report in the latest Council agenda packet. Nephew said that the Dock Association just paid the 2024 dues a few days ago so that

money would not be included in the total. Nephew added that there are less boats this year because of the low lake level and there are fewer people on the wait list.

Barton Winter arrived about this time and he was asked if he had any comments. Winter said that he was interested in the condition of the hockey rink, and a short discussion followed about various methods to improve the rink, including providing a white-colored base for the rink.

Minutes. The draft Minutes for the February meeting were unanimously approved.

Beach Easement Maintenance. Simmons described the condition of Elm Beach and said that it has deteriorated over the years, especially with the low lake levels. She reported that she will be meeting with Rice Creek Watershed District staff soon to discuss what might be done to improve the beach. The Committee also raised a concern over the condition of the retaining wall along the street at Ash Beach. It has some cracks and may need shoring up. The City will ask the engineer to take a look at it.

Upgrades and Repairs to Trails. McCarthy reported that there were some issues with the Ash Trail. He used a schematic showing the trail to describe areas where improvements are necessary and where some adjustment of the route may be necessary. He discussed that some private property owners are infringing on the path. The Committee discussed options for improving the trail. Hulett volunteered to obtain a cost estimate for spreading wood chips along the trail.

Arsenault advised the Committee that the Mahtomedi Garden Club had denied the City's application for a grant to cover a portion of the cost of trees for planting in Polly's Park. The Garden Club said the application was denied because the City was not ready to implement the project but the City could reapply as the project developed.

New Walking Path (Highwood Street). McCarthy said that the City was looking into some legal issues regarding the path. The City was also uncertain how the path would be cleared.

Review of Beach and Park Signs. The Committee reviewed the proofs of the new signs and agreed upon the language to be used. The language for the four beaches with boats – Ash, Birch, Elm, and Dellwood – will be identical, while the sign for Kay Beach – a swimming only beach – will be different. The Committee agreed that there would be one sign for each of the beaches and two signs for both

Tighe-Schmitz Park and Bloomquist Park. Simmons will work with the City to get the new signs made and installed before the parks open for the summer.

Rice Creek Watershed District Grant Opportunities. The possibility of a grant from RCWD for work in Birchwood parks was put on hold until the matter of draining Priebe Lake and discharging into Hall's Marsh is resolved. The Committee briefly discussed the fact that grants from other organizations might still be something the City could pursue.

Conservation Initiatives. Simmons reported that Birchwood residents could now obtain compostable bags locally and recycle their household organics like food scraps. The bags are available free of charge behind the Fire Station in Mahtomedi and can be recycled at the same location, Mitchell added that the bags and recycling bins are also available at no charge in Ramsey County on Hoffman Road between Cedar Street and County Road F.

The Committee discussed the upcoming city-wide Clean Up Day, scheduled for Saturday, April 27. The Committee identified a list of cleanup activities that could be undertaken by volunteers who show up. These activities included garbage pickup, weeding at various parks and at city hall, beach cleanup, painting at the hockey rink, leaf raking and tree trimming. It was even mentioned that the Council table in city hall needed to be raised so council members did not bang their knees when they sat at their places. The Committee agreed that coffee and donuts should be available that Saturday morning for volunteers. The City will send out an email alerting residents to Clean Up Day a few days before April 27.

Mahtomedi Garden Club Grant Opportunities. Arsenault had advised the Committee earlier that the Mahtomedi Garden Club had denied the City's application and no further discussion occurred.

Planning for Tighe-Schmitz Park. Committee members Mitchell, Simmons, and Arsenault and Councilman McCarthy, who all attended a meeting on April 16 with the Washington Conservation District and the Rice Creek Watershed District, stated that there was nothing new to discuss. Arsenault prepared a summary of the meeting and provided Committee members with a copy. That summary is attached to these Minutes.

The Committee discussed the upcoming Public Forum on Tighe-Schmitz Park scheduled for Saturday May 18, 2024, and assigned certain tasks for Committee members to take the lead on at the Forum.

Community Outreach. Weier stated that the deadline for submitting material for the Summer Newsletter was May 27 and any members with suggestions for what to include should get that information to her before that date.

Visual Mitigation of the Lift Station Generator. The Environmental Protection Agency still hasn't responded to the City so it hasn't been determined yet whether mitigation will be required.

General Maintenance/Volunteer Initiatives. The Committee noted that there was a volunteer sign-up sheet on the webpage.

Next Meeting. After a brief discussion of whether Tuesdays, rather than Thursdays, would be a better night for members to meet, Arsenault moved, seconded by Mitchell, that the Committee designate the third Tuesday of the month as the regular meeting time for the Parks Committee. The motion carried unanimously. The next meeting of the Committee will be on Tuesday, May 21, 2024. Mitchell will advise the City Administrator of the change for the regular meeting to the third Tuesday of each month and request that this change be made on the webpage.

Adjourn. 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Mitchell
Secretary

Attachment 1

Summary of April 16, 2024, Meeting

Summary of Planning Meeting for the Birchwood Parks and Natural Resources
Public Forum for Tighe-Schmitz Park

Present: Mary Sue Simmons, Jennifer Arsenault, Al Mitchell, Justin McCarthy,
Lori Tella (Washington Conservation District), Molly Nelson (Rice Creek
Watershed District), Hannah Peterson(Washington Conservation District)

The meeting began at 1:30. Introductions were made and general discussions were
had about the role of WCD and RCWD and their involvement in this project. Grant
funding was discussed and then discussion moved to planning for the public forum.

RCWD will bring refreshments, roots display for kids, info sheets, and volunteered
to send a postcard to invite the community to the forum. WCD also volunteered to
do a mailing and posters. Further discussion will iron out these responsibilities.

The Parks Committee will put out A-frame signs withing the community
advertising the forum. Jennifer Arsenault will get paper products for the
refreshments.

The following is the tentative agenda for the forum and who will be responsible for
each part.

The public forum is scheduled for May 18, 2024 from 10-12.

1. Introduction from a Parks Committee member

- Introduce those present
- State goals of the forum *Educate attendees about the drainage and soil
composition of Tighe-Schmitz Park
- *Gather attendees' ideas for the Park's future use

2. Brief history of the Park

- As some parts of the city were being developed, the builder used the current
soccer field as a landfill for building materials.
- There is a drainage pipe that runs under the soccer field that moves water from
Priebe Lake to Hall's Marsh.
- Previous regular use of baseball field, previous regular use of soccer field,
current community use of hockey and pleasure rink, along with the playground

- Because of the potential issues with the buried building materials and drainage issues, the possible uses of the park may be limited and with that introduce Lori Tella and Molly Nelson.

3. Lori and Molly can/will talk about the White Bear Lake watershed and how this affects the Park and its development. They could also talk about the Washington Conservation District's and the Rice Creek Watershed District's interest in this project.

4. A Park Committee member will talk about the ideas that were gleaned from those who attended the first public forum and then explain how group discussions will happen to get ideas from this group.

Basically, a committee member will be a part of each group to facilitate discussion of how residents would like to see the Park used. Each group will have a concerns/ideas form they will fill out and share with all attendees. All present will then use stickers to essentially vote for their support of the proposed ideas. Jennifer Arsenault will get stickers and prepare the papers for each group.

5. Once the attendees have finished voting, a committee member can summarize the results of the voting. Thank those who attended for their time and ideas and assure them their ideas will be used to shape the planning for the Park's development. Thank Lori, Molly and Hannah. Invite residents to a volunteer event (?). Tell them to grab some refreshments and say that the committee and those from WCD and RCWD will stick around for a bit if they have other things they would like to discuss.

Set-up for this event will be on Thursday, May 16 at 10:00.

Summary submitted by Jennifer Arsenault

4/17/2024