

**City of Falcon Heights  
Parks & Recreation Commission  
Minutes  
Monday, June 9th, 2014  
6:30 p.m**

**In Attendance:**

Christina Erickson       Gordon Strom       Mary Hannon Jacobson  
 Liz Asmus                 Dave Thomas         Michael Breen  
 Cari Lee  
 Staff Michelle Tesser      \_\_\_\_\_ Staff Tim Pittman      \_\_\_\_\_ Council Liaison Chuck Long

1. Call to Order - 6:40 pm
2. Any corrections to May minutes? Approval of May meeting minutes.
3. Overview on Council's Discussion on Park Improvements Study conducted by WSB and Associates.

Email from Chuck on response of the Council stated that we have a "blank slate" and can move forward without worrying about funding.

**Step 1 is to work on a master plan.**

Michelle will meet with Candace to determine a timeline.

Mary - that will include high level decision making; theme's of parks but without specific comments on amenities.

Michelle - Curtiss field is highest priority and we have submitted for a grant to generate funding for the Curtiss Field playground. The grant requires a site plan. Therefore, we will begin with a master plan for Curtiss so that we can get the site plan ready for the fall grant requirement . Candace will give us more information on how to move forward. We need a site plan for the master plan as well. .

Liz – the pond area won't be addressed?

Gordon – the pond area is being addressed. the pond fence is already taken care of with the drainage plan that is through the Capital Region District. Construction begins Fall of 2014

Michelle – it is based on Candace's schedule. It could be in addition to Monday night meetings, we'll see what Candace recommends.

Liz - she'll walk us through the process?

Candace will develop a proposal/contract for the city to sign first. The Council will then need to approve the contract before work on the planning will begin.

Gordon - Does she need a defined scope? Final deliverables?

Liz - if we have to have a plan by August, do we have enough time to pull this together?

Mary - We could discuss what we heard from the park study and give some general ideas to Candace.

Gordon – can we assure she has at least one brainstorming session with P and R?

Michelle – I think so.

Michael - maybe she could send around some ideas via email that we can respond too.

Michelle – she can show us designs and give us some ideas to respond too.

Candace has the information from the park study from the neighbors around Curtiss Field. This will be included in the plan designs.

Gordon - Candace's company probably has a useful website we could peruse for ideas. It might be useful to have some prioritized projects and a time line for completion.

Michelle - we have to have the parks and buildings audited as part of this process too.

Liz - is their consideration for how the area's population may grow over time to respond to the parks?

Michelle - Candace will have to respond to that.

Liz - one issue with the park is that there is a toddler park, but much of the activity here isn't with toddlers.

4. Grant Funding Opportunity for Curtiss Field Playground - see above. Grant proposal due in the fall,

5. Update on Recreation Programming -

Tesser discussed recreation programming. She is canceling Pee Wee Sampler classes, but everything else is going. There is still one more week for registrations. Michelle has all her staff hired. She is off to a good start. There is good enrollment numbers.

6. Movie in the Park volunteers -

Michelle has zero volunteers at the moment. Gordon agreed to volunteer. Michelle has gift cards from local businesses she will put into drawings for summer events.

7. Curtiss Field Park Hours -- Back in January, we discussed the park hours. A local resident would like to change the park hours. There was a decision back in January of 2013, the decision was made based on the number of police calls to the area. The city compared times of other cities park closing hours, and they were all 10:00pm. Cities included St. Paul, Roseville and Minneapolis. The commission at that time decided not to change the park hours.

Liz - After 9:00pm, there is very little activity in the park. General consensus is that changing the park time will not change the activity in the park. Noisy park users are unlikely to read the park signs of closure time.

Liz - the park was designed for a small population, and that appears to be part of the problem. Park attendance is not high later in the evening. There are some concerns about park behaviors. There are a lot of kids in a very small park.

The lay-out and foot print of the park is up for grabs - conversation about what are the many options to consider the neighbors issues and concerns the rights of residents of the community to use the park facility. Ideas included moving the building, moving the basketball court, moving the playground, adding greenwalls for sound reduction, adding sound reduction walls, and considering the usefulness of the park building. There is a desire for more Curtis Field programming, as requested by the SE residents at a city meeting in October 2013. A lot of residents were not happy with the park.

It is a very small area for a park with a lot of residents.

Cari - Chuck's email was clear that each park is to be distinctive - parks can't meet all needs.

Mary - There will be special features at each park, but each park should have basic features.

#### **Final comments -**

We hope to reduce problems and issues with the redesign of the park.

No changes in park hours at this time. We agree with the decision made in January of 2013.

Mary - Should there be communication to the neighbors around Curtiss field to explain the process of the park design?

Gordon will write a communication to the residents to include in the next newsletter. Emails to specific areas can be sent out too. The more communication the better.

#### **8. Public Works Report -**

Tim sent an email to Gordon and Michelle. Tim is unable to attend. He is mowing about every 3 days and pouring sidewalk panels between Albert and Pascal. He is skim coating Snelling service drive. Mulching around trees on Cleveland Avenue, weeding, street sweeping almost done. Larpenteur planting is in the works in the medians, a lot of the plants didn't make it.

9. New Business -

If we add more meetings, we need some advance notice for child care. Kids can also come to meetings if they are at the park.

Gordon: Can Michelle copy us on emails for scope and schedule of the work with Candace?

Michelle: Sure.

Meeting Conclusions:

- a. Summary of Decisions Made
- b. Summary of Action Items
  - 1. Michelle to update us on Candace's timeline
  - 2. Gordon to write a communication or article for the newsletter, due by end of July.
  - 3. Park hours not to change at this time,
  - 4. Review examples of parks master plans -
- c. Documents to Attach/PDF with these Meeting Minutes
  - i. Chuck's email regarding the Council discussion.
- d. Incomplete Decisions which should be included on the next Agenda
  - i. None at this time

Adjourned: 7:40 pm

**Next meeting date: Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup> at Grove (mistake in meeting agenda – listed as the 7<sup>th</sup> this is incorrect it is the 15<sup>th</sup>.)**

**Submitted by: Christina Erickson**

**Email from Chuck Long, Liaison to the Parks and Rec Commission – regarding Park Improvement Plan Study and response from the City Council.**

Hello commissioners,

As you know, last night the council workshopped the parks study. We agree with the study's recommendation that we adopt a park system approach in which our parks offer different amenities that complement each other rather than viewing each park in isolation. What this means is that we envision each park having certain very basic common features (i.e., a swing set / play area, picnic bench) but otherwise that each park be put to its highest and best used based upon each park's unique features and assets as identified in the study. By creating a specific, unique emphasis for each park we use our resources more efficiently and effectively, increase use of underutilized parks, and increase movement and interaction across the city.

We also agreed with the study's recommendation that we establish a theme or themes to unify the parks system. Candace offered some suggestions. We did

not adopt any specific one, however, and would look to the commission for thoughts on that.

We discussed costs and are willing to make the financial commitment it will take to do the job right. So, going forward, the commission should not overly concern itself with cost issues. The council will handle those at a later point.

A big part of this will be changing how residents perceive the parks. Although people in the survey overwhelmingly said they prefer a park system over three identical parks, the comments make it clear that people feel that way provided "their" park has everything they want. There is a certain degree of provincialism and very much an "our park" and "your park" mentality in the city. This will need to change. Under our approach, people will not have every amenity two or three blocks away. They may have to cross Snelling or Larpenteur for what they want. And that's okay. This is by design and intent. But changing attitudes takes time and we have to be prepared that some people are not going to be immediately receptive.

So, the charge to the commission is to develop a master park system plan that includes a specific plan for each park which puts each park to its highest and best use, and keeping in mind what other activities/opportunities are already available nearby in other cities. For the most part, you have a blank slate. You should be as creative as you want - within reason, of course (I.e., we are not going to be building a year round skating facility like the Roseville Oval or a community golf course). We also need to keep in mind accessibility issues. As you all know, we are embarrassingly out of compliance.

Needless to say, this is going to be a lengthy process. The council has agreed to retain Candace to help and guide us with this project. It will be nice to have her expertise in crafting these plans.

While you need to keep an overall park system scheme in mind, the first emphasis needs to be on Curtiss. It will be torn up at the end of the summer to address the flooding issues during which time the open space where the hockey rinks go will be regraded. Thus, we'll be looking at starting the renovations there next spring. However, we have some very real and significant grant opportunities available but we need to have a design proposal submitted this fall. Michelle has already spoken with Candance and will be meeting with her to go over the timelines. So, we will be very busy this summer! (and, frankly, the next few years)

Finally, we discussed revisiting the trolley path project that is referenced in the study and I had discussed at a prior meeting. This is something the Mayor, Bart, Michelle and I will work on with the University. We'll keep you posted.

I think this pretty much sums it up. Michelle can fill in anything I've missed at Monday's meeting. Thanks!

Chuck

Charles E. Long