

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
LITTLE CANADA, MINNESOTA**

JUNE 1, 2023

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a regular meeting of the City Council of Little Canada, Minnesota was convened on the 1st day of June, 2023 in the Council Chambers of the City Center located at 515 Little Canada Road in said City.

Chair Howarth called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m. and the following members of the Parks & Recreation Commission were present at roll call:

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION: Abruzzese, Hipp, Horwath, Mui, Williams, and Youth Commissioner Churcher.

ABSENT: DeLong Miller and Schletty

ALSO PRESENT: Parks & Rec/Community Services Director Bryce Shearen and Recreation Coordinator Sierra Hietala.

MINUTES

Commissioner Hipp made a motion to approve the May 4, 2023 Parks & Recreation Commission minutes as submitted. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS: PIONEER PARK UPDATE

The Parks & Rec Director provided an update on the project, noting that staff checks in with the contractor each week and the majority of the construction is anticipated to be complete by August 31st. He asked if the Commission would be interested in conducting a park tour of Pioneer Park prior to the July meeting.

A consensus of the Commission agreed to hold a park tour at Pioneer Park prior to the July meeting.

OLD BUSINESS: POLLINATOR HABITAT UPDATE

The Parks & Rec Director provided background information on the Thunder Bay Park pollinator project focusing on the preparation work that began in 2021 and additional work that occurred in 2022. He stated that work would continue in 2023 and 2024. He provided details on the educational signage that is being used to spread awareness to the public. He commented that the area looks fantastic and the project is going well. He provided details on the experts from U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Great River Greening that have been assisting with the project.

MINUTES

PARKS & REC COMMISSION

JUNE 1, 2023

Commissioner Abruzzese referenced the areas that are currently being mowed but marked for future pollinator enhancements and asked if there is a timeline for when that would occur.

The Parks & Rec Director replied that the current grant with Great River Greening continues through 2024 and the City has budgeted a substantial amount to continue this project. He noted that in 2024 and 2025 they would begin to tackle those additional areas.

Commissioner Hipp asked for details on the Girl Scout project.

The Parks & Rec Director replied that the project did not move forward.

Chair Horwath noted that as a user of the park, he appreciates the area.

NEW BUSINESS: MRPA ARTICLE – SPOONER PLAYGROUND

The Parks & Rec Director reported that the Spooner Park playground was highlighted for accessibility and inclusiveness in the most recent Minnesota Recreation and Park Association magazine.

NEW BUSINESS: RECREATION COORDINATOR UPDATE

The Recreation Coordinator provided a recap of recent events and activities. She also provided detail on upcoming events and activities as well as youth and adult programming.

Chair Horwath commended staff, recognizing how far the recreation program has come.

NEW BUSINESS: REVIEW OF PARKS AND RECREATION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)

The Parks & Rec Director explained that the City uses its CIP to schedule public improvements and purchases over a ten-year period. He noted that the CIP is a planning tool and is not a budget or approval of those items as each item would still need to come forward for consideration and approval. He provided an overview of the park's items, noting that many of them are placeholders without an exact date of when they would occur. He noted that in 2026 the fund used for parks projects will go negative, therefore additional funds options will need to be considered prior to that time. He welcomed input from the Commission on the parks items identified for the next ten years.

Chair Horwath stated that he did not see the water feature for the Pioneer Park playground project.

The Parks & Rec Director explained that has been included within the Pioneer Park play node, noting that the project has already been approved by the City Council.

MINUTES
PARKS & REC COMMISSION

JUNE 1, 2023

Chair Horwath noted a connection to the Thunder Bay trail which is in disrepair and asked if that could be repaired.

The Parks & Rec Director commented that staff was just out there to review the conditions for the trail project and will be reviewing the numbers this fall to determine if there is room in the project to include that connection.

Commissioner Abruzzese mentioned grants and partnerships which are often unknown until the time a project arises, as those are funding sources that could take pressure off the City. She also mentioned the Spooner Park entrance sign but stated that she did not see other park entrance signs noted.

The Parks & Rec Director noted that staff already has the entrance signs for the other parks that will be installed. He provided more details on the Spooner Park entrance sign plans.

Commissioner Abruzzese commented that she believes that the parking lot project for Spooner could be pushed down the list. She noted that the project makes her nervous as it would require additional tree removal.

The Parks & Rec Director commented that a lack of parking for the shelter has been identified. He noted the other elements that are being considered as the City festival is also held in that location. He commented that Canadian Days made a substantial contribution to assist in the parking lot but has asked that those funds be reallocated for the electrical upgrades that are needed to support the event. He stated that with the funds for the parking lot project being reduced in that manner, the project would most likely be pushed.

Chair Horwath stated that perhaps there could be signage to alert shelter users to additional parking areas.

Commissioner Hipp stated that she liked the priority list in the Pioneer Park Master Plan, showing the different priority categories. She commented that she would prefer to reassess the winter trail at this time as planned with the limited budget. She stated that she likes the tree nursery concept in that corner and more nature concept items.

The Parks & Rec Director provided additional details on the concept for a pump track as included in the CIP. He also noted discussions about a community building, which would have significant budget impacts. He recognized that there is a gap within the community for a community gathering space that could accommodate programs, community groups, and rentals for events and possibly wedding receptions. He stated that at the next meeting, there will be a discussion about pickleball as the City does not have dedicated courts and it is the fastest growing sport. He commented that there are opportunities to consider as there are courts slated for resurfacing this year.

MINUTES

PARKS & REC COMMISSION

JUNE 1, 2023

Commissioner Mui stated that after completing the logo project, he would like to consider a gift shop, as that could help to generate funds.

Commissioner Hipp asked if there would be a presentation on Pioneer Park at Canadian Days.

The Parks & Rec Director commented that was done in the planning process to solicit input from the public. He noted that the City would host a booth at the event to provide updates on different projects if there was an interest to help staff the booth. He stated that the City is currently seeking applications for a communications staff member, hoping to have that person on board in July.

Chair Horwath asked if there is an update on the plans for Labore Road.

The Parks & Rec Director commented that they did receive a lot of public feedback and Bolton & Menk will provide a summary report at the next City Council meeting and a final project recommendation this fall.

REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hipp stated that she has recently visited a lot of parks and was pleased to see a lack of litter. She stated that she was able to watch the wood chipping. She noticed some itch weed within the nature play area.

Chair Horwath had nothing further to report.

Commissioner Williams had no report.

Commissioner Mui commented that it has been fun to watch the pollinator areas develop and grow.

Commissioner Abruzzese stated that they have been enjoying the updates to Rondeau Park.

Chair Horwath referenced the bridge shared between the City and Maplewood which is in disrepair and asked the status.

The Parks & Rec Director commented that Little Canada and Maplewood would partner and will be seeking grant applications.

Commissioner Churcher noted an area in Nadeau that may have poison ivy.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

MINUTES
PARKS & REC COMMISSION
JUNE 1, 2023
Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.