

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

**JUNE 3, 2021**

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a regular meeting of the City Council of Little Canada, Minnesota was convened on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of June, 2021 in the Council Chambers of the City Center located at 515 Little Canada Road in said City.

Chair Dave Miller called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. and the following members of the Parks & Recreation Commission were present at roll call:

**PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION:** Hipp, Horwath, Miller, Ray, Schletty, Chu and Abruzzese.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Parks & Rec/Community Services Manager Bryce Shearen and Recreation Coordinator Samantha House.

*In accordance with the requirements of Minn. Stat. Section 13D.021, the City Administrator has determined that an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent because of a health pandemic or an emergency declared under Chapter 12 of the Minnesota Statutes.*

*Because of the health pandemic and emergency declaration, it has been determined that attendance at the regular meeting location by elected officials and members of the public is not feasible. Therefore, some or all of the Commission members may be participating by telephone or other electronic means. This meeting will be recorded in its entirety.*

*Members of the public may monitor the meeting on the CTV North Suburbs website (live stream) or use the meeting link provided on the city website prior to the meeting.*

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Commissioner Abruzzese made a motion to approve the May 6, 2021, Parks & Recreation Commission minutes as submitted. Commissioner Hipp seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**PRESENTATION: PIONEER PARK MASTER PLAN PRESENTATION BY BOLTON & MENK**

The Community Services Manager introduced Josh Shields from Bolton and Menk and noted that the purpose of tonight's meeting will be to review the Pioneer Park Master Plan.

Josh Shields introduced himself and Madeline Dahlheimer from Bolton and Menk. He stated that the intent tonight is to review Pioneer Park Phase 1 Master Plan which is the next step following the joint meeting the Commission held with the City Council in March. He reviewed the desired outcomes for the meeting noting that they would like feedback on the concepts and ideas, discussion related to prioritization, and discussion related to the overall budget

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considerations. He reviewed the efforts to date which began in 2018 as well as the tentative schedule moving forward which includes input from the public.

Madeline Dahlheimer identified the Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas, noting that the intent would be to focus on Phase 1 while still planning for Phase 2 opportunities, should that parcel be acquired in the future. She stated that the improvements fall into the categories of access/accessibility, vegetation and stormwater, and amenities and enhancements. She began with access and accessibility and provided a high-level overview of the proposed improvements within that category including trail repairs, accessible routes, and parking. She reviewed the improvements proposed within the park vegetation and stormwater category including drainage improvements, tree management plan, shoreline vegetation, and enhancement of vegetation along the south perimeter.

Mr. Shields stated that one of their engineering staff members has helped to develop the stormwater improvements.

Eric Seaburg, Bolton and Menk, stated that there has been a lot of coordination efforts thus far that would continue as they look at long-term improvements to drainage and pond vegetation. He stated that there will be opportunities to partner with other agencies, such as the watershed. He noted that there would continue to be open dialogue with different entities to find the best fit.

Ms. Dahlheimer stated that the bulk of improvements would fall into the category of amenities and enhancements as it ranges from benches and lighting to play equipment. She stated that while there is a broad list of items within the category as previously discussed. She stated that at the March meeting there was a lot of discussions related to the water feature and provided examples of both passive and active features. She also provided an update on the concept of artificial turf, noting that will be kept on the backburner and the City will start with a sand injection of the soccer field in an attempt to improve drainage.

The Community Services Manager commented that the sand injection occurred earlier this week and would occur each year for the next four to five years. He stated that this will be used as a test area and if successful could be repeated in different areas throughout the park.

Chair Miller referenced the northeast pond and potential water feature of a dock. He commented that the water gets very stagnant and asked if addressing that would be part of the process.

Ms. Dahlheimer stated that when they completed the onsite kickoff meeting that was noticed and prompted the discussion related to vegetation improvement and how the water condition could be improved. She provided additional details on the more focused improvements beginning with the playground and active water feature. She stated that it would make sense to have the play node located in the existing playground area which will help to create a park entry and gateway into the park. She stated that the play node would serve multiple uses and age groups while providing opportunities for play, shade, seating, observation and gathering with the potential for

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future expansion. She reviewed the two proposed concepts for the play node, identifying locations for the different play node elements within each concept. She then provided more details on the playground which would focus on accessibility, would include rope elements and elements with height, while also incorporating a unique theme. She provided different photographic examples along with general projected costs for different play equipment options.

Mr. Shields asked the Commission for input on whether there are elements that were reviewed that would help to make the playground a success.

Commissioner Hipp asked if there is a theme that could connect to the history of Little Canada, which should be something different than the playground at Spooner to provide more options. She stated that she liked the example of the ropes course and large slide and then a water feature that looks natural such as a rock waterfall.

Chair Miller agreed that the theme would help to provide direction. He confirmed that ropes and climbing was a reoccurring theme from the public.

Commissioner Abruzzese stated that one of the features provided an integrated theme leading into the water feature and she prefers the shade feature and landscaping to also be cohesive to the theme.

Commissioner Ray commented that he would tend to favor concept two as that would place the water feature more in the center of where people would come in.

Commissioner Chu stated that she has been visiting many parks recently and a new park in Winona stood out to her. She stated that the idea of climbing and height has become popular and noted an example she has seen of a climbing wall. She referenced Tamarack Nature Center which has a unique theme that allows for climbing.

Commissioner Horwath stated that the park also includes a sign that encourages parents to let their kids be creative and explore the play features. He stated that he also prefers concept two.

Commissioner Chu asked if congestion would be created by having the playground and water feature so close to the entrance.

Mr. Shields stated that people will gravitate toward the features in the park they want to use, whether that is the play node or fields. He stated that the sidewalk trail is also an important feature.

Ms. Dahlheimer explained that the play node is meant to group those play features while the other users of the park can stay on the main trail to reach the fields or other uses in the park.

Commissioner Chu provided the name of the park she has mentioned earlier with climbing.

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Ms. Dahlheimer stated that they spoke with a playground representative today and talked a lot about the natural play-type features and noted that she will attempt to gather that information and pass that on to the Commission.

Commissioner Horwath asked if there is a concern with the lifespan and maintenance of the water feature and playground in order to plan appropriately for replacement equipment.

Mr. Shields stated that play equipment and a water feature would have different maintenance needs and the intention would be to ensure the water feature is adaptable for the future.

Ms. Dahlheimer reviewed different options of active water features. She noted that some of the features include fountains and misters within a plaza area, which would allow the space to be multi-purpose and used as a plaza if the water feature is not turned on. She also provided examples of costs for different types of water features and splashpads features. She asked for input from the Commission related to both the play area and water feature.

Commissioner Schletty stated that he likes the hybrid suggestion with a multi-purpose area with misters that could still have an arch with sprinklers and perhaps feature the Little Canada logo. He referenced the distance from the play area to the bathrooms and noted that with a water feature he could imagine even more of a need to have a restroom closer to that play node area.

Mr. Shields stated that if there is going to be a water feature there would need to be a pump nearby and typically would be housed in a building or could be housed in something similar to an electrical box. He stated that if there was a desire for a restroom facility, it could probably be designed in a way to accommodate the pump equipment and therefore could be dual purpose.

The Community Services Manager commented that will be part of a larger discussion. He stated that the decision has been made that the bathrooms would not be open during times when the park is not staffed because of vandalism concerns. He stated that there are portable bathrooms available during the warmer months.

Commissioner Schletty commented that this is a large park and perhaps this is a need going forward if the intent is to bring more people in for activities.

Chair Miller commented that he liked the rock mister feature as that could also fit with the theme of the overall play node and would also be a lower-level feature that would not necessarily require people to change clothing.

Commissioner Abruzzese agreed that option would lend itself less towards a need to change into swimwear and would also provide multi-purpose. She stated that the group would also need to narrow the scope of a historical Little Canada theme.

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Mr. Shields stated that he has also had that question as to the imagery that could help to refine future concepts.

Commissioner Chu stated that she would also like to see a connection to the future with a focus on nature and honoring the land. She stated that the focus would be both historical and the current interaction with nature.

Mr. Shields stated that they can work with staff to gather additional input from the community during the public engagement process.

Commissioner Hipp also suggested involving the Little Canada Historical Society.

Commissioner Ray stated that he likes the natural look of the mister but also liked the idea of an arched feature that would have the Little Canada logo as mentioned by Commissioner Schletty.

Ms. Dahlheimer noted that some of the water features have bright colors, but it is also possible to use more muted colors where the equipment would blend more into the area.

Commissioner Chu referenced the online engagement opportunity and asked if there would be other methods used to gather input from the community.

The Community Services Manager commented that staff would attempt to use some of the engagement tactics used throughout the RCP process.

Mr. Shields provided details on the elements related to trail lighting. He also provided examples of different types of pedestrian lighting and the associated costs. He also reviewed other elements that should be considered to better focus the intent.

Ms. Dahlheimer commented that the different styles provide a broad range of options. She stated that the intended level of lighting and preferred style would help to provide a better scope.

Commissioner Ray commented that while ornamental lighting may be appealing today, it could become outdated and the bollard style could become covered in snow or hit with equipment. He stated that the utilitarian style would seem to be the best option using as much solar power as possible.

Commissioner Hipp agreed and noted that there would be an opportunity to incorporate the Little Canada logo as well to carry that brand through.

Commissioner Schletty stated that the comment was made that there is no trail lighting in other parks and therefore he agrees there are other considerations as mentioned including possible disturbance to neighboring properties and wildlife. He stated that perhaps lighting at all hours

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would invite activity that is not desired later in the nighttime hours and asked if the lights would be turned off at a certain time.

The Community Services Manager noted that the park closes at 10 p.m. and the lights turn off at 10:15 p.m. therefore the trail lights would shut off at the same time.

Commissioner Hipp commented that the ballfield lights are bright and provide subtle lighting, but the ballfield lights are not always on.

Commissioner Abruzzese stated that her original thought was to have lights closer to the ground but agreed there could be challenges and therefore would prefer the utilitarian option as well.

Commissioner Chu commented that Pioneer Park is pretty bare and therefore the utilitarian lights would seem to stand out in areas where there are not trees. She stated that perhaps they could blend more with the surrounding area with additional plantings. She stated that she likes the Little Canada Road lighting as it is mixed with trees and plantings and makes the trail usable at night.

The Community Services Manager commented that if trail lighting is included that could set the tone to include trail lighting at other parks to provide consistency and therefore that larger concept should be considered as well.

Chair Miller commented that he believed that the intent of lighting was to provide additional lighting in certain areas to increase safety but not to have continuous lighting. He agreed that including trail lighting would open the door to the larger conversation for lighting at other parks.

Commissioner Ray commented that he would agree to feature lighting, rather than continuous lighting.

Mr. Shields reviewed the next steps which would include a public engagement process noting that they will bring back those comments for the Commission to review at the July meeting. He stated that they would intend to bring an initial improvement recommendation to the Council on July 14<sup>th</sup> and have another community engagement opportunity during Canadian Days and final presentation to the Council at the August 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Commissioner Hipp stated that the Commission should put some thought and consideration into the concept of a theme.

Commissioner Horwath stated that he has been on the Commission for about six years and remembers that concept has been part of the discussion for the entirety of that time. He stated that although he likes the idea of a historical theme, he would not want to see that hold the project back.

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Commissioner Chu stated that perhaps the theme is not fully incorporated into the features of the park but the ongoing programming at the park, which would provide more flexibility and the ability to continue to adapt over time.

Chair Miller stated that he agrees that there should be work on the theme to narrow that down and receive input from the public.

Mr. Shields encouraged the group to think about organizations that could be partners in that process as that could help to guide the direction as well. He thanked everyone for taking the time to review the presentation tonight and provide input.

Miller introduced the following motion:

***MOVE FORWARD WITH THE CONSIDERATIONS OF THE TWO DESIGN OPTIONS FOR THE PLAY NODE AND BASED UPON THE COMMENTS MADE TONIGHT.***

The foregoing motion was duly seconded by Horwath.  
Ayes (7). Nays (0). Motion passed.

**OLD BUSINESS: RETURN TO IN-PERSON MEETINGS**

The Community Services Manager stated that the City has been operating under an Executive Order which has allowed meetings to be held virtually. He stated that the City Council is moving back to in-person meetings and with the anticipation of the emergency powers of the Governor ending, the option to meet virtually will go away. He stated that the Commission will return to in-person meetings in July and could also consider holding park tours again as well.

Commissioner Chu commented that if they continue to go back to only allowing in-person participation in local government meetings, that would seem to be behind the times.

Chair Miller agreed but noted that decision is made on a State level and that option should continue to be discussed in that format. He also hoped that more flexibility would be allowed to increase public participation.

Commissioner Chu asked if there would be an appropriate format to voice those opinions.

The Community Services Manager commented that he could follow up with other City staff to determine the best method to provide those opinions.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**UPDATES**

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None.

**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*