

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

JANUARY 6, 2022

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a regular meeting of the City Council of Little Canada, Minnesota was convened on the 6th day of January 2022 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 6:30 p.m. and the following members of the Parks & Recreation Commission were present at roll call:

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION: Hipp, Miller, Mui, Schletty, Chu, and Abruzzese.

ABSENT: Horwath

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

MINUTES

Commissioner Peter Schletty made a motion to approve the December 2, 2021, Parks & Recreation Commission minutes as submitted. Commissioner Anna Abruzzese seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

PARKS AND RECREATION MISSION STATEMENT

Dave Miller read aloud the parks and recreation mission statement.

WELCOME NEW COMMISSIONER – MIKE MUI

Commissioner Mui introduced himself.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR AND COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS

The Parks and Recreation Director congratulated Commissioner Schletty on his reappointment to the Commission and Commissioner Mui for his appointment to the Commission. He stated that Chair Miller was appointed again as Chair for 2022 and noted that the Commission would need to appoint a Vice-Chair.

Abruzzese introduced the following motion:

APPOINT RON HORWATH AS VICE-CHAIR FOR 2022

The foregoing motion was duly seconded by Chu.
Ayes (6). Nays (0). Motion passed.

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The Parks and Recreation Director noted that the terms for Commissioners Chu and Horwath would be expiring at the end of 2022.

OLD BUSINESS: PIONEER PARK UPDATE

The Parks and Recreation Director stated that the next phase will be to begin to design and bid elements identified in the Master Plan, beginning with the play node. He highlighted the different elements within the play node concept design including the water feature.

Commissioner Mui commented that darker colors get warmer in the summer months and suggested that perhaps lighter colors are used.

The Parks and Recreation Director Community noted that they have found that all colors get hot for poured in place rubber. He stated that they are looking at planting some trees that would cast shade over the area.

Chair Miller asked for details on the construction process and phasing.

The Parks and Recreation Director commented that while work can be done in phases, it would make more sense to shut this entire area of the park down for one year to complete the work at one time for safety, efficiency, and cost savings. He stated that the goal would be to complete the play node as one cohesive project.

Commissioner Schletty asked if there could be drinking fountains added, as that feature is lacking in the area near the tennis courts and basketball courts.

The Parks and Recreation Director commented that was considered in the past, but the cost was prohibitive because of the need for a water line. He noted that the water line would be run with the water feature and therefore a water line for a drinking fountain could most likely be run as well at this time.

Commissioner Chu asked for details on the anticipated timeline.

The Parks and Recreation Director commented that staff is attempting to have the plans ready to go to submit for grant funds in March of 2022. He hoped that the City would be able to obtain some grant funding for the project, along with the contribution of up to \$400,000 from LCRA. He stated that they would hope to bid on the project around this time in 2023 and would like to have the project constructed in 2023 with the play node open in late summer/fall of 2023.

Commissioner Chu stated that there are still decisions to be made in terms of the playground equipment.

The Parks and Recreation Director stated that many of the playground design elements were outlined in the Master Plan. He noted he would ask multiple companies to submit a proposed design using the Master Plan as a guide. He noted that it is anticipated to have a neighborhood

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meeting or survey to gain input from the community from those designs and the Commission could then make a decision. He stated that the playground would be built with the construction project and he would like it to include a community build portion.

Commissioner Hipp commented that she loves the blue water theme leading to the water feature.

Commissioner Mui asked if the City accepted donations from the community for funding.

The Parks and Recreation Director commented that they are always looking at alternative funding methods. He stated that outside of nonprofits, he cannot recall a sizable donation from a resident or other entity. He reviewed some of the private donations that have been received for different purposes. He stated that originally this project was planned for 2022 but was delayed to review additional funding opportunities.

Commissioner Chu asked if the mechanism is in place to allow residents to donate towards a project. She stated that the community builds have been successful and perhaps they could think about how to spread the word on how members of the community could engage and contribute.

Chair Miller agreed that he prefers to donate towards a project or specific purpose.

Commissioner Mui stated that he would guess most people are not aware of the plans to renovate the park and perhaps would be willing to contribute towards the project.

Commissioner Chu stated that the community was engaged and interested at Canadian Days.

Chair Miller stated that perhaps social media could be used to reach people in different ways.

Commissioner Mui stated that he would be interested in developing a document with fundraising ideas.

Chair Miller commented that could then be presented to the Commission and forwarded to the City Council.

OLD BUSINESS: RONDEAU PARK UPDATE

The Parks and Recreation Director commented that staff continues to work on the design and construction documents, anticipating that project would go out to bid in the next month or so. He stated that the playground and shelter have been purchased. He noted that once the construction timeline is known, they would determine when a community build could occur. He stated that perhaps a subcommittee is formed to plan the community build.

Commissioner Chu asked how the adjacent residents will be made aware of the project and any disruptions.

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The Parks and Recreation Director commented that there will likely be some disruption because there will be the park project in addition to the street project. He stated that the residents will be mailed a letter related to the street project and could include park improvements as well.

NEW BUSINESS: 2022 PARK ASSIGNMENTS

The Parks and Recreation Director commented that the intent is to assign each Commissioner a park to visit and provide input. He stated that the assignments have been updated to provide each member with a new park to visit.

The Parks and Recreation Director commented that in-person meetings have been able to work and the Council would like to maintain in-person meetings. He stated that staff will review the option for hybrid or virtual meetings to provide flexibility. He asked for input from the Commission on their preference for meetings.

Commissioner Hipp commented that she believes virtual meetings would be more effective, as mask-wearing makes it harder to hear voices.

Commissioner Chu commented that she would also like virtual meetings because of the concerns with the pandemic. She stated that she would also support a hybrid option to allow people to attend in person and those that are not comfortable attending virtually.

Chair Miller stated that he likes in-person meetings. He believed hybrid meetings could be a challenge as he would want to ensure everyone can be heard and that those attending virtually are equally recognized. He stated that he would support any option that allows for fair participation.

Commissioner Schletty stated that he enjoyed returning to in-person meetings but also understands that the pandemic has picked back up. He stated that a hybrid format would also be great and allow participation for those that may not feel comfortable attending. He stated that things are moving quickly, and he would be hesitant to decide at this time. He stated that if more people are comfortable meeting remotely and that is allowed, he would support that.

Commissioner Abruzzese stated that she believes that the meetings should have returned to remote some time ago because of the circumstances of the pandemic and the number of cases. She commented that the remote meetings were efficient, and that format would place less risk on the members of the Commission.

Commissioner Mui commented that he believes that it would be an all-or-nothing decision, whether that is in person or remote, and would not choose hybrid.

Chair Miller commented that it would appear the Commission would like to request to return to remote meetings until things settle down with the pandemic.

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The Parks and Recreation Director commented that he is unsure what the thresholds are and would need to do additional research as the City is not currently under a state of emergency.

Commissioner Abruzzese stated that she would request that the City Council approve that ability for remote meetings.

Commissioner Schletty stated that perhaps there is a threshold related to the number of cases that trigger the ability to meet remotely.

The Parks and Recreation Director noted that he will continue the discussion with staff and the City Council.

Commissioner Chu noted that there have been lengthy discussions at the School Board on this topic as well as changing workforce needs requiring people to choose between their work responsibilities and the ability to attend a meeting in person. She stated that virtual attendance allows people to attend the meetings even when they have other obligations or a sick child at home.

REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Chair Miller asked each of the Commissioners to introduce themselves as a new member has joined the group. The Commission members introduced themselves, providing details on their background and time on the Commission.

UPDATES

The Recreation Coordinator provided updates. She stated that the winter farmers market will begin on January 10th and noted that she already has 15 vendors committed. She stated that the Cookies with Santa event was a success and provided a recap, thanking all the event sponsors. She stated that snowshoe rentals began today and noted that rental information can be found on the City's website. She highlighted upcoming youth and adult activities.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.