



MINUTES

Call to Order/Roll Call

Andrea Ostergaard called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm

Members present: Teresa Eisenbise, Taher Herzallah, Andrea Ostergaard, Priscilla Perez Umphress

Staff present: David Cullen, Public Works Streets/Parks Superintendent; Keith Windschitl, Recreation Director; Deanna Saefke, Recreation Secretary; Connie Buesgens, Council Liaison

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Columbia Heights Parks & Recreation Department is to foster a healthy, inclusive community by providing a diverse park system and recreational opportunities that enhance the quality of life for people of all ages while fostering sustainability and environmental stewardship for future generations.

Community Forum

None at this time.

Consent Agenda

Motion by Eisenbise, second by Perez Umphress, to approve the consent agenda. Upon vote: All ayes. **Motion Carried.**

Letters and Requests

None at this time.

Old Business

Update Sullivan Lake Master Plan

Cullen reported in 2024 the Commission reviewed the installation of a fitness court at Sullivan Lake Park. Based on the recommendations to the City Council the equipment for the fitness court was purchased in 2024 for installation in 2025, saving approximately \$20,000 in 2025 pricing increases. No work has been performed at Sullivan Lake Park since 2008 when the park was last developed. At the December Park & Recreation Commission meeting construction phasing of the master plan along with costs estimates were reviewed. An update of funding, phasing, and planning is as follows. An additional grant of \$250,000 was awarded in January to the City for the installation of a fitness court, removals, grading, lighting, benches, and trails. Cullen reported the Community Development staff worked on that grant. Ostergaard asked if the trails aspect would include the trail around Sullivan Lake since we didn't get the grant for those improvements. Cullen replied it would be for new trails. Windschitl reported some of the money was from Anoka County and was originally money for use during COVID and this project met the criteria to be awarded this funding. Cullen indicated staff are working on the application for a grant through the DNR to support both the new playground area and sport courts in phase two of the plan. Hansen and Cullen are working with the Utilities Department to look at hydraulic studies for the completed Medtronic site and replacement of the Sullivan Lake sanitary lift station. There is also a watermain connection from 51st Avenue to 53rd Avenue to provide adequate flow and fire protection. Utility work will need to be coordinated with the parks improvement plan. The lift station will need to be designed in 2025 for installation in late fall of 2025 or spring of 2026. The watermain will need to be extended from 51st Avenue, north of the new play area, prior to phase two or three. Windschitl added some of the water work needs to be redone in order to meet the needs of the new development in the old Medtronic site. Especially if it becomes housing.

Ostergaard asked if that is the same issue holding up the development at the old Rainbow site. She had heard there was a lot of utility work that needs to be done. Cullen answered no. Buesgens replied the groundbreaking is supposed to be

spring of 2025. Finances and some other things have finally fallen into place. It is still unsure if there will be a grocery store at that location. Through the TIFF money that the developer is receiving there will be complete overhaul of the pipes and sanitary sewer lines, storm drains. Cullen added Jackson pond will be included. They will also look at the potential development of the site and the needs and capacity of the system. Buesgens added they will take care of the flooding issues in that area. Ostergaard replied that it is great and knows that people are waiting.

Eisenbise asked if it was a staffing group that applied for that extra grant for the Sullivan project. Windschitl replied it was staff from the Community Development Department. Buesgens responded there is a Director who oversees economic development, there is a City Planner, and a City Inspector. Eisenbise asked if they were the ones who got the grant. Buesgens replied yes, they have connections with the county and the county has certain amounts of money that can be used for projects. Windschitl added there was an original amount awarded to the city and staff went back and applied for additional money. Cullen indicated this is proactive work done through Community Development that is ongoing. Ostergaard indicated it would be a nice presentation for the Commission to meet the staff and see what their views are on the development of the park system in the city at a future meeting.

Eisenbise asked what the restrooms would be like at Sullivan Park, just the portable ones. Cullen replied it is undetermined what the final plan will include for that. He believes there will be portable ones as opposed to a permanent one that needs to be heated, they cost more, cleaning it, locking it, and security. Windschitl replied that the plan is to remove the existing building and not build new restrooms.

Ostergaard asked how the parks passport is going. Perez Umphress replied in December an email was sent to the communications staff. Saefke indicated Rottler, the Communications & Engagement Coordinator, couldn't attend this meeting but is available in February. She asked if the commission wanted to discuss their ideas and goals are now so they have an idea before he attends the meeting. Buesgens asked if the park passport could be explained. Perez Umphress explained while at a Roseville nature center she saw a passport to all of the different city parks. It stated all of the amenities at each park. She designed one on Canva and made a rating scale using slides. She didn't realize how many parks were in Columbia Heights until she joined the commission. Ostergaard replied it would be a great way to obtain feedback on the parks. The idea being that people would turn in the passports. Windschitl asked if the city of Roseville had hard copies of this. He was wondering if there is another way to get this out to the public. Even just a reference for people looking at the website. It would be nice to have more photos and amenities listed on the city website. He complimented Perez Umphress on the work she did, it looks great. Having the passport online would be a great reference for people and avoid a lot of phone calls that staff receive regarding what amenities are available at the parks. Ostergaard indicated logos are needed on the passport and also receive feedback from staff. Perez Umphress replied that updated photos are needed as well. She used ones from the city website and Google maps. Buesgens asked what photos were on the website for Lomianki Park. The park passport was displayed and Lomianki Park just has a photo of the wood park sign. Ostergaard realized when she joined the commission that she was very unfamiliar with all of the parks in the city. She indicated it would be nice to have some printed copies at our events like Pets in the Park, but not a lot are needed. Buesgens mentioned a previous city manager had seen other cities having medallions or other types of prizes for contests. Ostergaard recapped that Rottler will meet with the group, and get updated pictures on the passport. Saefke replied staff are working on getting updated park photos on the website, a city logo will be added to the passport, making sure the commission agrees with the final product, getting ideas on how to promote the passport, and have a prize or goal for turning them back in. Ostergaard indicated a summer campaign would be good and then turn them in by Truck or Treat time. Cullen suggested the Art & Info Fair is also a good time to put it out to the public. Ostergaard indicated if this is a campaign where it is closed out at a certain time it would give the commission time to reflect on the process, did we receive good feedback, do we want to try it again or even expand it in any way. Eisenbise added that having the passport available indefinitely for a passive activity is still a good idea. Perez Umphress indicated that receiving a prize during a certain time frame is good. Eisenbise indicated design work can continue and is wondering if Rottler can attend a meeting. Saefke replied yes he is available in February. Ostergaard asked if the Communications

staff will then take the project and run with it or at what is the implementation process. Saefke replied that it will be a good discussion. Staff can help with the final design and get the marketing and communication portion out to the public. Cullen suggested submitting some questions ahead of time to Rottler so there are expectations and answers for the next meeting. Ostergaard asked if there needs to be a meeting with Rottler prior to the meeting or if he is aware of the passport. Saefke replied that is why this discussion was started now. Members can email questions and suggestions to her and then get them to Rottler. He did look at what the City of Roseville offers for their passport program. She complimented the members on getting this community engagement program started and that it will be a great way to obtain feedback from the public on the park system for staff to review. This program can be as big or as little as they want but it is the first project they are implementing and is a steppingstone for future things. Cullen suggested having three or four things to have answers for at the next meeting. suggested putting it in the monthly E-newsletter. Herzallah stated they would like to see more of a concept based off what Perez Umphress made that would be turned into a hard copy. Having Rottler explain what the process would be for publishing the passport and the best way to market the program. He asked when the next city newsletter is being distributed. Buesgens replied there is a monthly e-newsletter online and printed one quarterly. Saefke replied mid-February will be the spring newsletter. The summer newsletter will cover June, July and August. Eisenbise stated it would be great to get the passport in the monthly e-newsletter. Ostergaard took notes and will email that to Saefke.

Herzallah asked how the schools use the park space in the city. Windschitl replied they use the softball field for the girl's team at Ramsdell Park. This is probably the most utilized facility that the city owns or operates. This is a joint effort when using it for softball because the school district does the field maintenance, and the city does the mowing and lawn care. Columbia Academy uses McKenna Park for some of their softball games. Keyes Park is occasionally used for softball, for 12 & Under teams. Immaculate Conception School uses Huset Park for baseball, softball, and soccer. Saefke replied sometimes special events are held at McKenna and Ramsdell Park. Ostergaard reported that Valley View uses McKenna Park a lot and they do take the younger students on a field trip to Sullivan Park often.

New Business

None at this time.

Reports

A. Recreation Director

Windschitl reported that the Total Body Conditioning exercise program has a high amount of participation and there is a waiting list for January classes. The adult open volleyball at the Hylander Center happens on Friday evenings and is having forty adults or more. People pay a couple of dollars to get in and we will be raising that fee within the next few months based on what surround communities charge for the same activity. Buesgens asked how many nets there are. Windschitl replied two. At times we will utilize the school gym if it is available. Due to the high usage in the gym he has budgeted a little more for maintenance next year but is hoping that it is not as much as it was this past year. The senior citizen program coordinator has been running a lot of new and different programs. She brings the seniors to concerts, plays, theaters, and it has really attracted a lot of younger seniors. It has really taken off. Buesgens reported that Candy Lack does a really great job. Windschitl indicated there is an ice skating program on Saturdays with 19 kids signed up so far. The last two year the warming house has been open during that class time at Huset Park. The boy's basketball program has had a lot of last minute registrations but there will be a team at every grade level. If people would register earlier or on time we could often have two teams but had to commit to the league by a certain date.

Ostergaard asked what the feeder programs are for our school sports. Windschitl replied it is recreation programs and the Columbia Academy will take over at 6th or 7th grade for most sports. Sometimes we have had teams continue on into other competitive leagues through the recreation department and still play school sports during those seasons.

Windschitl reminded the commission that the annual SnowBLAST is coming up on Saturday February 1st. If anyone wants

to volunteer to sit at a welcome table or another activity please let Saefke or Rottler know. Eisenbise replied that she wants to but needs to check her schedule. Saefke replied that even if someone has an hour or a specific time there are things to help with distributing ice skates, handing out program, helping to take things down at the end. The band Pickle will be playing in the heated tent for the whole time. If there is snow we will get snowshoes. There will be firepits, smores, popcorn, the tractor will be pulling the trailer around the park again, snow soccer, pony rides and other animals to pet and the CH Athletic Booster will have soup. She indicated there will be Key Club volunteers. There is a need at the end to help take things down and get equipment back into the park building.

B. Public Works Director

Cullen reported that he is working on finalizing the purchase of two pieces of equipment. One is a trash loader for the parks system. It is a bigger version of the mine dump truck. The second one is a replacement tractor for ice rink maintenance and summer maintenance at parks. The ice is looking really good for skating. In February they will be reaching out to obtain part time seasonal staff for the summer. Herzallah asked if they use a Zamboni for the ice. Cullen replied no because the rinks are all outdoors and use a water truck for flooding to build the ice and then an ice scraper to smooth out the bumps.

Ostergaard asked if there were any updates on the public works building. Cullen replied internally staff are working with architects to look at different designs. The biggest question comes down to funding. Buesgens replied this is a bonding year and are hoping to receive funding.

C. Commission Members

Buesgens reported at the recent Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, MWMO, meeting staff requested funding and were approved for \$88,000 to pay for professional engineering services to conduct a water quality study of Sullivan Lake, including an assessment of current conditions and understanding of the ecological behavior and response to incoming pollutants, and a plan to work towards improving the lake in the future. Members indicated that is exciting to receive help to improve the quality of that lake.

Buesgens indicated that Heights NEXT, based on the book that she presented to the commission, would like to see if Commission Members would be interested in working together to host a chess event along with the chess club at the High School. They would hold the event outside by Murzyn Hall in the shaded area. Eisenbise replied yes. Buesgens would like to have the event in May or some time before school is out.

Eisenbise reported her family went to Huset Park for the open warming house and it was great. They were there early and the only ones there at the time. When they were leaving other people were showing up. The ice was in great condition.

Motion by Eisenbise, second by Perez Umphress, to adjourn the meeting. Upon vote: All ayes. **Motion Carried.**

Ostergaard adjourned the meeting at 7:09 pm.
Deanna Saefke, Recreation Secretary