



**MINUTES  
PARK BOARD MEETING  
March 4, 2024**

**Meeting Location**

City Hall Conference Room – 450 Virginia Avenue; Long Lake, MN 55356

**Present:** Chair: Suzanne Caswell; Secretary: Erika Leachman; Board: Thomas Joyce, Tony David and Donny Chillstrom; Public Works Director: Sean Diercks

**Absent:** Council Liaison: Gina Joyce

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:36 pm by Chair Caswell.

**Approve Agenda**

*A motion was made by Joyce, seconded by David, to approve the agenda as presented. Ayes: all.*

**Consent Agenda**

**a. Approve Minutes of February 5, 2024 Park Board Meeting**

*A motion was made by David, seconded by Leachman, to approve the February 5, 2024 meeting minutes as presented. Ayes: all.*

**Regular Business**

**a. Discuss Outdoor Recreation Grand Application for the Conceptual Holbrook Park Skate & Splash Plaza Project**

The Park Board continued a discussion of the conceptual Holbrook Park Skate & Splash project, including refining community needs and concerns and identifying key goals and components. The project would replace the existing unpaved outdoor ice rink with an all-season outdoor recreation facility providing a community hockey rink and a pleasure ice skating rink with an integrated splash pad for cooling and water play during warm seasons. Key goals identified include balancing demands for open pleasure skating with a growing demand for hockey league play for youth and adults. The Park Board discussed the project relative to the selection criteria for the MnDNR Outdoor Recreation Grant Program.

The City has scheduled two City Council hearings on the project. The first hearing is a 1.5-hour work session to present the project concepts and receive feedback and direction on options to move the project forward. The second hearing is an opportunity for the Council to support via Resolution the City's application for grant funds for the project from MnDNR.

If the City Council approves the Resolution, Park Board Secretary Leachman will draft the application with support from Chair Caswell and member Joyce. Through the application process, the project details, schedule, and costs would be developed.

Key discussion topics included the following comments:

Chair Caswell: As we prepare the grant, are we supposed to know the project cost?

Secretary: Yes, and we have researched that. The grant request must be substantiated by a cost estimate, including a 50 percent local match. The grant maximum is \$350,000.

Chair Caswell: I know the area has been impacted by the Highway 12 freeway and lies near homes. Is on-site and on-street parking sufficient? The parking lot is full during little league games in the summer and this may be the case during hockey practice in the winter.

Leachman: During the last Park Board meeting, the Board identified two projects that could be eligible for grant funding in the 2024 cycle. The ice rink/splash pad is a good candidate for the MnDNR Outdoor Recreation Grant program based on research. Another project is a new trail on City-owned property connecting Holbrook Park to Willow Drive; however, the trail would lie in the City of Orono and require coordination and permitting from Orono as a joint effort under the MnDNR Local Trails Grant program. Therefore, while the trail project is feasible, it is not great timing given the quick due date and the current political climate between Orono and Long Lake. The City could pursue the trail project in the future.

Leachman: To support the Council's consideration of the project, the Park Board has prepared a memo and presentation to frame up the opportunity and project. The intent is to bring the Council up-to-speed on the concept and seek direction. At this stage, there is a lot of flexibility. Ultimately, the project must relate to the City's goals. The Park Board will also share research conducted by the Board Secretary about the project cost/benefit options, the needs and opportunities for Orono Youth Hockey to participate in the project, and the technical information provided by custom rink builders.

Leachman took the Park Board through the presentation slide deck she prepared for the City Council.

Chair Caswell: Would like to continue for the Park Board to consider how we can appeal to children with special needs, including playgrounds and facilities that are all-access/universal-access and inclusive.

Leachman: Definitely, those are the types of requests that receive the grants. Opportunities at Dexter Park and Hardin Park should be revisited by the Park Board in 2024/2025.

Leachman presented the existing key city goals for Holbrook Park. Leachman described the City of Eagan's recent outdoor refrigerated ice rink project as a local precedent. Their new \$1.3 million rink was funded in part by the local hockey organization. The Eagan rink is owned by the City and supports both open skate and reserved/fee-based hockey league play.

David: We need to ensure that the access is programmable by the City in order to ensure that the local hockey teams don't dominate the space and prevent open skate access.

Leachman: Described the current Holbrook Park ice rink conditions as being unpredictable and having shorter seasons dependent upon weather conditions. The rink is difficult to flood and maintain. There is no connectivity to the warming house or park trails. When it isn't operating the way it is supposed to, it is a dead zone and prevents use/access to the warming house. There is no ADA access or continuity with the trails.

Chair Caswell: Do you see this new rink requiring more labor or effort from City Public Works?

Public Works Director Direcks: No, it should not.

Leachman: Rink coolers are designed to provide high-quality ice in up to 50-degree outdoor temperatures from November to March seasonally. The outdoor rinks are plumbed so that you can reflood and groom the ice easily. You have a cooler that allows this to happen.

Leachman: Opportunity with the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program to get up to \$700,000 with a 50% match. Everything you put into the project counts, including staff time, equipment, volunteer time, donations, other local grants, and cash. In Eagan, the Eagan Hockey Association took out a loan and helped to fundraise the donation to the City. Once you get the rink operational, you pay off the loan. If we do a public/private partnership, the fundraiser can be a recipient and donate to the City. The City can receive grant funds and park fees. We should explore what aspects of the project could the city do that will go towards the required local match.

David: Does the rink come with a warranty?

Leachman: This is a rehab/improvement project. The earlier question on parking is a good one – there is way more parking available for Holbrook Park than any other park. If parking demand goes up substantially, a second phase could restripe or expand the parking lot to accommodate more vehicles.

Based on bids for the new rink(s), we're considering the trade-off of season/duration, and ROI. The Park Board will present the Council with different options.

- Option #1: Pave the rink, no cooler (\$80,000-100,000) – shorter season, high maintenance effort
- Option #2: Pave the rink, portable cooler (\$150,000-400,000) – portable cooler will not achieve consistent ice for a full skating season
- Option #3: Permanent cooler; HVAC-like system (\$500,000-700,000) – full winter season rink, no summertime amenities or community gathering spaces.
- Option #4: Pave hockey rink, permanent cooler; splash pad and pleasure rink (\$1-1.5 million) – All-season recreation facility with multiple uses and a community gathering area

The hockey rink could be a revenue generator for the City. A community patio with firepits on either side would create accessible community gathering spaces. Making them reservable for parties and events could generate revenue.

From a timeline perspective, this summer would be for providing notice of the grant award, then the City would need to work through the design details, with the target of having facilities open by the 2025 skating season. After the City Council's consideration, the City will want to engage locals and stakeholders, including potential funding partners.

Leachman: Support from Park Board members at the Council work session would be good. The work session will be held on Thursday, March 7 from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm.

#### **b. Establish the Next Park Board Meeting Date, Location, and Agenda Business**

Park Board Chair Caswell is requesting a more regular cadence for a meeting schedule, so the Park Board decided to plot out the first six months of meetings for 2024 as follows:

- April 8 – City Council Conference Room at 5:30 pm
- May 6 – Holbrook Park at 5:30 pm
- June 3 – Hardin Park at 5:30 pm
- July 29 – Dexter Park at 5:30 pm

#### **Adjourn**

Hearing no objection, Park Board Chair Caswell adjourned the meeting by general consent at 6:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Erika Leachman, Park Board Secretary Officer