

Minutes of the
Edina Park Board
December 9, 2008
Edina City Hall, Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joseph Hulbert, Howard Merriam, Jeff Sorem, Ray O'Connell, Todd Fronek, Mike Damman, George Klus, Rob Presthus

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ben Pobuda, Randy Meyer, Dan Peterson

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Janet Canton, Ed MacHolda, Larry Thayer, Ann Kattreh, John Valliere, Todd Anderson, Susie Miller, Tom Shirley, Donna Tilsner

I. APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 12, 2008 PARK BOARD MINUTES

Ray O'Connell MOVED TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 12, 2008 PARK BOARD MINUTES. George Klus SECONDED THE MOTION. MINUTES APPROVED.

II. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Van Valkenburg Park Off-Leash Area for Small Dogs – Mr. Keprios gave a power point presentation to give a synopsis of what he is proposing, which is outlined in his staff report. He stated that it is his recommendation that they not pursue a small dog off-leash area at Creek Valley at this time. He indicated that he is proposing that they develop a small dog off-leash area at Van Valkenburg Park right next to the existing off-leash dog park. He noted that they would need to add a double gated system similar to what is already in place as well as have similar signage posted.

Mr. Keprios pointed out to the Park Board that both a notice and a map were posted at the off-leash dog park, e-mails were sent through the "City Extra" and a few people who have been active in this effort also received e-mails. Mr. Keprios explained that the Park Board has a few options. First, they can either approve or reject staff's proposal. Secondly, a notice could be sent to all of the off-leash area permit holders (683 permits) and on top of that notify all households within 500 to 1,000 feet of the park so they can be informed before a decision is made. Lastly, a decision could be delayed to January or February being that this project could not be started until the frost is out of the ground.

Mr. O'Connell stated that he thinks this is a really good plan and it will provide an excellent test. Therefore, he would suggest that they go ahead as soon as possible.

Goergean Swartz, 6105 Lincoln Drive - Unit 136, informed the Park Board that she has a 6 ½ pound Yorkie and added that she is probably the smallest dog that goes to the park. She commented that most of her neighbors who have small dogs are kind of afraid to take their dogs to the park because there are some very big dogs there and even if they just want to play the small dogs could easily get hurt. Ms. Swartz stated that she thinks this would be fantastic and urged the Park Board to approve this plan.

Pam Albinson, 6115 Lincoln Dr. - Apt. 251, indicated that all of the people she has encountered who have dogs are wonderful with them. She noted that she has a six pound miniature poodle and commented that they have had to leave three times. She explained that the reason they had to leave was basically because the big dogs were having a great time and her dog wanted to get right in there and play too. However, her dog ended up getting trampled on. Therefore, she thinks it's a great idea because then the smaller dogs can run and play with dogs their own size. She stressed that this would be a wonderful opportunity for them.

Claudia Eggan, 305 Harrison, indicated that she owns two golden retrievers and that she doesn't disagree that there should be an area for the small dogs. She noted that what she is worried about is the space they are looking at for the small dog area. She pointed out that specific area is really the only good flat useable space in the park and noted that she would advocate extending the small dog area to the other end of the fence as much as they can and add it to the other end of the fence because the small dogs absolutely do need their own space.

Ms. Eggan asked Mr. Keprios if it would be possible to get picnic tables placed at the park because it really is a social area when people bring their dogs and it would be greatly appreciated.

Laurie Deutsch, 5809 Drew Avenue, informed the Park Board that she adopted the off-leash dog park (Happy Tails). She noted that she has advocated that there be more benches, more bag areas and more garbage cans put out because of the increase in the amount of people at the dog park. She stated that she agrees there needs to be a small dog area because she has seen small dogs come in and get trampled because they want to be a big dog but they are in a little body. Ms. Deutsch pointed out if they want to encroach on 10 to 20 feet of flat area that would be fine but don't take any more because that is the only flat area. She stated that she has asked Mr. Keprios in the past for some type of a gazebo (covering) for when it's raining or snowing as well as they would like to have water. She asked if the small dog park could be put further down on the other side of the large fence.

Mr. Hulbert asked if the busiest times at the dog park are after work as well as Saturday and Sunday mornings and if so how many dogs are typically there and what percentage of them weigh less than 20 pounds. Ms. Deutsch replied that Saturdays and Sundays are busy and she would say that approximately 20% of them are smaller dogs. She added that typically there could be as many as 30 dogs in total. Mr. Hulbert asked Ms. Deutsch how many small dogs she would anticipate would use the small dog area at its busiest point. Ms. Deutsch replied probably around five but pointed out that those numbers would probably change because a lot of the small dog owners have stopped going to the park because of safety, etc.

Mr. Fronek asked Ms. Deutsch if what she is saying is that the proposed off-leash area for small dogs is too big. Ms. Deutsch replied that she feels it should be extended on the other side of the fence because then you will not be taking any of the large dog park area. The small dog park will still be the same size it just won't be encroaching on anything because there is just grass on the other side. Mr. Fronek

asked Mr. Keprios to comment on the area being discussed. Mr. Keprios explained that it is not a large area it's about the size of a hockey rink. He pointed out that the reason they picked this site for now is because it would probably have the least amount of residential conflicts with the neighbors close by. Mr. Keprios noted that as long as an off-leash area already exists at Van Valkenburg to which there has virtually been no resistance from the neighbors it made sense to use the existing property. Mr. Keprios commented that as far as size he thinks it's appropriate and that the challenge is going to be location because he doesn't think they want to make it much smaller than a hockey rink in size and that's where a compromise needs to be made. He stated that he thinks a smaller chunk of the existing larger dog park can be compromised than what's currently proposed. He noted that they can definitely look into extending the fence further down where there currently are a couple of parking stalls and just see how that plays out. He indicated that he thinks there's a compromise they can come up with that will satisfy both parties.

Mr. Klus indicated that he would encourage the users of the off leash dog park to work with staff in trying to get some of the items mentioned into the budget for the future. He commented that if there is a large enough group of people maybe they could ask for donations and therefore they would be able to get the items a lot quicker. Mr. Keprios pointed out that there already is a fund set up with the Edina Community Foundation and now all that needs to be done is to get the word out.

Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that currently they are having a problem with the plastic bags and it is something that they need to get under control because it is killing their budget and they are going to end up losing a good share of that service. Ms. Deutsch replied that she agrees the plastic bags have been a huge problem and noted that she and a few other people propose that the city no longer supply bags and post a warning that plastic bags will no longer be available after a certain date and that everyone will need to supply their own bags and see how that works.

Ms. Deutsch commented that it has been getting very slippery at the park and that she has brought her own salt to the park. She suggested that with the new tags coming soon maybe it could state there is a foundation if people would like to donate to it in order to get some amenities at the park.

Ms. Martineau, 315 Monroe Avenue, stated that she has been going to the park two times a day since it opened and agrees there is a definite need for a small dog park. However, she doesn't want it at the expense of losing the prime flat area at the expense of the larger dogs.

Ms. Martineau stated that she would like to see more patrolling of the park because there are a group of regulars who are not paying. She noted that the city could be receiving a lot of money from these people and noted that she would like to see the park enforced a little bit better.

Mr. Fronck indicated that there are two issues. First, do we want to notify the neighbors and/or the current dog holders of this plan and the second is to discuss the actual small dog off-leash area itself.

Mr. Sorem stated that he would be in favor of not notifying the residents especially with the existing park and very little resistance to it. He noted that he thinks clearly there is a need for a small dog park and this would be a great location. Mr. Sorem stated that if they could extend it down into the park by the parking spots he would be in favor of it because he is concerned about taking too much of the area that was originally discussed.

Mr. Damman commented that he agrees with Mr. Sorem, we don't need to notify the residents about it. He stated that he is all for the small dog park and if it could be moved down a little bit that would be great but if not he would still like to see it go through.

Mr. Klus stated that he is in favor of having the small dog off-leash dog park because there needs to be one somewhere. He noted that as Mr. Keprios has shown in his presentation he is willing to adjust the fence so that it works for everyone.

Mr. Klus commented that one good suggestion he heard was when the new registration comes up in January he thinks it would be great if part of that registration would include a way for people to give a donation to the dog park if they want to.

Mr. Merriam indicated that he would encourage the Park Board to accept staff's recommendation. He commented that he would suggest that staff work with the stakeholders and find a resolution that works. He noted that he does not think they need to notify the neighbors and that they can move ahead with this tonight.

Mr. Presthus indicated that he agrees with pretty much everything that has been said. He noted that he does play softball at Van Valkenburg Park and to his knowledge no one uses the two parking spots that have been mentioned. Therefore he does not think it would be an issue to extend the small dog park.

Mr. Hulbert stated that he doesn't think further notice is needed. He commented that if nothing else just compromise and split the difference on the flat spot. Mr. Hulbert asked if some grading could be done to create more flat spots to which Mr. Keprios replied no, that could not be done.

George Klus MOVED THAT PARK BOARD ACCEPT STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION BUT WOULD LIKE TO HAVE NEXT YEAR'S REGISTRANTS RECEIVE A FLYER WITH THEIR REGISTRATION INFORMATION THAT PROMOTES DONATIONS TO IMPROVE THE OFF-LEASH DOG PARK BY DONATING TO THE EDINA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION.

Mr. Keprios stated he would be happy to have a hand out go with the registration. He explained that he was holding off on doing that until items were prioritized so that people are aware of where the monies will be going first, second, third, etc. Mr. Klus indicated that he thinks with January coming up that would be the key time to do this since that is when most people will be renewing their license. Therefore, there is

probably less than a month to get that ready. Mr. Klus stated he would leave off the donation part of the recommendation if staff will agree to look into it.

Mr. Fronek asked Mr. Klus if he would like to amend his motion and give staff the ability to change the dimensions versus exactly what is being proposed. Staff would have the leeway to put the dimensions where they feel it best fits for both parks.

Mr. Fronek read the motion as he understands it “TO APPROVE STAFF’S RECOMMENDATION TO PLACE THE SMALL DOG PARK IN VAN VALKENBURG AS PROPOSED WITH THE CAVEAT THAT THE STAFF CAN WORK WITH THE DIMENSIONS TO FIND AN OPTIMAL SOLUTION”.

Howard Merriam SECONDED THE MOTION.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- B. Countryside Park Master Plan – Greg Ingraham, Consultant from Hoisington Kogler Group, Inc. gave a presentation on the final master plan to the Park Board and explained the process that they went through.

Mr. Merriam stated that the plan is a great composite of everything that’s been talked about.

Mr. Fronek commented that he was surprised that the trail system loop was taken out to which Mr. Ingraham replied he was surprised too because generally what they hear from people is that they like the loops of just about any size. He stated that he thinks the people just want to maintain the natural feeling. Mr. Keprios pointed out that one of the things he heard from the majority of the residents is that they do not want a circular path at this time to be part of the master plan being that Bredesen Park is so close to Countryside Park. Mr. Keprios explained that the good news is if the neighborhood changes and they decide they do want a path around the smaller park they can still add that someday down the road. He noted that not a whole lot has changed from its current character.

Mr. Keprios stated that the biggest challenge to them is going to be money. He also noted that it’s tough to plan for dollars when you don’t know what your plan is. Mr. Keprios explained that besides the money, the biggest challenge will be if a hockey rink is put back into the system because they are still operating one maintenance person short of what they had in 2003. He noted that they literally cannot add another rink to the system unless they eliminate another rink or add another staff person.

Mr. O’Connell commented that he thinks there may be a security problem and asked about lighting especially in the parking lot, warming house, etc. Mr. Ingraham replied they have not gotten that far into the plans. Mr. O’Connell suggested that when they do the lighting they not only program it to be on at certain times but to also have it act as a motion detector.

Mr. Fronek asked if a fence could be put around the outfield to which Mr. Ingraham replied that would be a decision on how you wanted to use it. He noted that if you put in a fence it will limit you a little on programming but yet it will give you a higher level of play experience.

Mr. Keprios explained to the Park Board that this is only a concept plan and that they are not yet to the level of details such as lighting, irrigation, etc. He stated that he does not anticipate any significant changes.

Joseph Hulbert MOVED TO APPROVE THE PLAN AS OUTLINED. Mike Damman SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- C. Edina Unplugged – Donna Tilsner, Recreation Supervisor, informed the Park Board that this will be the fourth year of having “Edina Unplugged”. She noted that it will be held on March 9, 2009. She asked the Park Board to help spread the word and suggest to people to not schedule meetings, athletic activities, etc. so that people can spend that time together as a family. She stated that word of mouth is very important. Ms. Tilsner indicated that they have met very little resistance over the years and that overall they’ve had some very positive experiences of families really enjoying their time together.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- A. 2009 Park Board Calendar - Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that they may need to move the September 8th meeting but he will not know until August. It is contingent upon whether or not there will be a primary election that day.

Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that one significant change he would like to make is, instead of holding the Braemar Inspection Tour on July 14th, to just have the Park Board play a round of golf and then take a tour of some of the parks that are of high interest at that time. He noted they could decide as a group what it is they would like to do. Mr. Keprios pointed out that the reason he is suggesting this is because he has noticed in the last decade or so it really has not been serving the purpose it was originally intended for when it was started back in the mid 1960s. Mr. Keprios explained the intention was for the City Council to get together and become better acquainted with their Board and Commission members in an informal setting. He noted that has not seemed to have taken place the last several years.

Mr. O’Connell commented that he would be happy to take people on tours of the whole Braemar Park area.

Mr. Fronek informed the Park Board that he and Mr. Keprios discussed the Braemar Inspection Tour and noted that he has gone the last few years but that the attendance has been low. He stated that he believes Mr. Keprios expressed the interest to put this in the Park Board’s hand to try to accomplish different objectives. He commented that one would be to see the parks and the other would be to interact with members of the boards and commissions as well as the City Council.

George Klus MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2009 PARK BOARD CALENDAR AS LAID OUT. Jeff Sorem SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

IV. UPDATES FROM STAFF

- A. Athletic Association Presidents Meeting - Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that this meeting will take place tomorrow, Wednesday, December 10th at 6:30 pm in the Community Room. He noted that if there is a Park Board member or two who would like to attend they are certainly welcome although it's not mandatory.
- B. Comprehensive Plan - Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that just as an FYI the City Council has now formally adopted the Comprehensive Plan and there are not a lot of changes to the Park section. He indicated that the City Council basically ran out of time to forward the request to change reclassification at Todd Park back to the Park Board for their review. Therefore, they handled that request and they did accept the neighborhood's recommendation and Todd Park has now been reclassified as a Neighborhood Park.
- C. Pamela Park Proposal – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that the reason he took this item off of the agenda is because he wasn't quite yet prepared to notify and request the Pamela Park neighbors to come in and respond to a plan. He explained that he thinks as staff they need to do a better job of fine tuning this plan. He commented that it's going to start tomorrow night with the athletic association presidents. He noted that it's also his intent to form a small task force that would include neighbors of Pamela Park and Presidents of youth athletic associations that have an interest in the park's development. He noted that that he would like to get more input from the neighborhood up front in the process. Mr. Keprios stated that when he feels they are more prepared and ready he will put it back on the agenda.
- D. Howard Merriam – Mr. Fronck informed the Park Board that tonight is Mr. Merriam's last Park Board meeting because he is moving to Minneapolis. Mr. Fronck and the Park Board thanked Mr. Merriam for his service. Mr. Merriam stated that Edina has a great park system.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.