

Minutes of the
Edina Park Board
May 12, 2009
Edina City Hall, Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joseph Hulbert, Jeff Sorem, Ray O’Connell, Randy Meyer, Bill Lough, Keeya Steel, Dan Peterson, Rob Presthus

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jennifer Kenney, Ben Pobuda, Todd Fronck

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Janet Canton, Ed MacHolda

I. APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 14, 2009 PARK BOARD MINUTES

Dan Peterson MOVED TO APPROVE THE APRIL 14, 2009 PARK BOARD MINUTES. Ray O’Connell SECONDED THE MOTION. MINUTES APPROVED.

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. Edina Garden Council Presentation – Diane Bomsta, president of the Edina Garden Council and Deb Armstrong, president of their youth and a member of “Friends of Garden Park” presented some information to the Park Board about the Edina Garden Council and gave a power point presentation. Mr. Keprios thanked the Garden Council for everything they have contributed to the city and noted that they are an amazing group and he really does appreciate everything they do.

B. YEA Corp Proposal for Chowen Park – Mr. Keprios gave a power point presentation to show the brief history on where they are to date with the YEA Corp proposal for Chowen Park. He pointed out that this really is a request to privatize parkland; it is not the same concept as a community garden, it is completely different. He pointed out that currently there is no policy or ordinance that prohibits this type of use for a park. He explained that they have privatized parkland in the past because the golf dome wasn’t always owned by the City of Edina; however, the city always owned the property. Therefore a precedent has been set in past practice. He indicated that because there is no written policy on how to deal with these they are dealt with on a case by case basis.

Mr. Keprios pointed out that as his Staff Report states he recommends that the Park Board recommend to the City Council that the YEA Corps request be approved for a one-year trial basis with the following conditions:

1. The site must be well kept, clean and safe for all park users at all times.
2. YEA Corps must provide liability insurance that includes the City of Edina as an additional insured.
3. After one growing season, YEA Corps must make another formal request to be granted use of the site for the following year.
4. If denied the right to continue to use the space for a garden, YEA Corps must restore the site to its original grass condition at their own expense.

He noted that he further recommends that the YEA Corps be held responsible for all of their own expenses. In other words, they must pay for and provide their own soils and materials needed to construct the garden.

Mary Helen Franze, 5717 Chowen Avenue, noted that she would like to make two points. First, when they talk about metal in design it's really chicken wire. Secondly, in terms of self-sustaining operations this is a new non-profit and they are vigorously fundraising in any way they can as well as all of their projects use resourceful practices. She noted they are teaching the youth they can attempt to do anything if they are resourceful and put together good prudent working skills and practices. She indicated that Edina Hardware is going to donate some items. Therefore, if the city does not want to cooperate with donating and delivering pesticide free soils they do have a back-up plan.

Mr. Sorem asked Ms. Franze if she is confident they can uphold the conditions staff has stated as far as maintenance, clean-up etc. to which Mr. Franze replied absolutely.

Mr. Hulbert stated that he loves the idea but he keeps struggling with the use of public land and does feel it sets a little bit of precedence. Mr. Hulbert asked if any of the parents might be willing to donate a little bit of their backyard for this project but hold their meetings at the park. He indicated that he is also struggling with the safety of a three foot fence with poles that are sticking up in right field of the little ball field. Mr. Hulbert commented that he has been driving around trying to think of areas in Edina that could possibly be turned into a large community garden.

Mr. Lough stated that from the beginning he thought this was a very good idea in concept. He noted that he doesn't look on this as a community garden but rather as an education opportunity for kids which is something that does fall within Park and Recreation. He commented that he doesn't see this as any sort of precedent or potential okay for anything that might resemble a community garden in the future without other kinds of work or research, presentations and proposals going into it first. He explained that if he limits this in his mind to an educational effort for the kids in this particular park area and with the residents going along with it and with the exceptions that have been stated, there is a difference between a community garden and an education project.

Mr. O'Connell stated that he is strongly in favor of this because it involves young people. He pointed out that they still have control and understand the precedence situation because they've gone through it several times on the Park Board. He explained that in some previous situations there was a strong attempt to completely privatize a large plot and in essence to disaggregate such a beautiful piece of property. Mr. O'Connell commented there are always two sides to the questions and feels in this case the benefits outweigh any negatives.

Ms. Steel stated that her issue would be accessibility of the public because she believes there is a place for organizations as far as community gardens. She indicated

that with the focus on education perhaps a partnership with the school might be a much more appropriate place since it would be for the children.

Mr. Peterson MOVED TO RECOMMEND STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL. Ray O'Connell SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED. **Approved:** Jeff Sorem, Ray O'Connell, Bill Lough, Dan Peterson, Rob Presthus **Denied:** Randy Meyer, Joseph Hulbert, Keeya Steel

- B. Community Gardens – Mr. Keprios indicated that at the last Park Board meeting there was a request that staff look into the possibility how to go about developing a community garden and what process should be used to establish appropriate sites. He noted that Chairman Fronck asked him to at least explore what it might cost to hire a consultant to which he found out it would cost approximately \$15,000 to do a study and doesn't think they should go down that path. Mr. Keprios pointed out that community gardens never surfaced through the Needs Assessment Survey and asked the Park Board if this is a priority they want staff to direct time and resources to. He noted that if the Park Board does want to go down this road he believes staff can probably come up with at least a pilot site with the help of staff and volunteers. He commented that in addition they will need to have the resources to develop and maintain the garden site as well as have budget dollars and equipment. Mr. Keprios explained that they will also need to have resources and a system to administer and manage equal access to these garden plots. However the most difficult challenge will be to find an area that is acceptable to those who live closest to the proposed site. Mr. Keprios asked the Park Board for a little more direction and then give the staff the charge to figure out a place for it.

Mr. O'Connell stated that he would suggest they wait until they get the results from the YEA Corps pilot project and then take a harder look at it in September. He added that currently they have a lot on their plate.

Mr. Presthus agreed with Mr. O'Connell and stated that he thinks it can be put off until next January after they've received more information.

Mr. Hulbert asked Mr. Keprios what he would expect to get out of \$15,000 if they hired a consultant. He also asked wouldn't staff have a pretty good idea if there are any potential areas without having to hire a consultant. Mr. Keprios replied that he thinks staff, with the help of volunteers, may be able to come up with a site that would work without having to spend \$15,000 on a consultant if they want to go in that direction. Mr. Hulbert stated that he thinks having a community garden would be a great thing if they could just find a good spot for it.

Mr. Meyer stated that he thinks there are two issues. First, he thinks they need to come up with a structured policy regarding privatization of public land so that it is a little more straightforward when the Park Board needs to deal with these issues. Secondly, with regards to the community gardens he is concerned that if they put this off until the fall the reality is that only gives them three or four months to the beginning of next year to pull something together and because it's such a large issue he doesn't think that is a realistic timeline. He noted that he thinks they need to

conduct some basic research and really think about if this is something they want and start to put it out to the public because he thinks they are going to get a lot of feedback and input as a result of this.

Mr. Peterson informed the Park Board that he found “raised beds” on the internet that a lot of community gardens around the country use. He noted he would like to see what those cost as well as if groups would buy into it. He indicated that he thinks a lot of sites could work with these raised beds.

Mr. O’Connell stated that he is not in favor of deferring this for a long period of time. He suggested that each Park Board member look at their assigned park and see if something might work. He also suggested talking to the Garden Council and maybe there is an area they could use at Arneson Acres for a community garden. Mr. O’Connell stated that he would like to get some more viable information and possibly get some concrete results.

Mr. Keprios stated that it sounds to him there’s a consensus to have staff move forward with volunteers, such as the garden council, and come back in August or September with a site than can be debated. Mr. Keprios explained there is a lot that comes into play with soils, raised beds, resources, etc. He noted that he thinks they can come up with one or two sites by the September time frame.

Mr. Lough indicated that he would like to know what processes or alternative processes are used in the set-up and management of community gardens from the standpoint of the city and more importantly from the standpoint of park and recreation. He asked what are things to be cognizant, what are the expenses that are involved, how is the management conducted, etc. He asked Mr. Keprios if the Park Board could get some type of concise presentation about the way staff would envision this is going to operate. He indicated that he thinks this would help a lot and then they could move toward coming up with a site. He noted that he wouldn’t like to solicit too much public input or interest at this point until they know what direction they are going. He commented that he would like to get ahead of the curve before it rolls them over.

Mr. Lough MOVED FOR STAFF TO DO SOME RESEARCH TO DETERMINE EXPECTED MANAGEMENT, LOGISTICS AND EXPENSES INVOLVED IN ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY GARDEN AS WELL AS RECOMMEND CRITERIA OR POLICY TO FOLLOW THAT ADDRESSES THE USE OF PUBLIC LAND FOR SUCH AN ENTERPRISE. Rob Presthus SECONDED THE MOTION.

Ms. Steel stated that she would like to add that they look for opinion on it and engage the public so that when they come back they will have a greater idea of who wants to be involved and possibly what areas show the most interest.

Mr. Keprios stated that he needs more information on what process to use for public input. Ms. Steel replied that she is looking for an informal process and is not expecting a mailing but to find something to at least make sure the public is aware of

it. Mr. Keprios suggested that possibly they do a press release and request public input on the issue and take that approach. Mr. Meyer commented that sounds like a great idea but another question they may want to ask is for input on whether they are looking for one big plot or for a few plots around town. He stated he thinks the key at this point is to keep it simple and include more information.

Mr. Meyer asked Mr. Keprios to sum up what it is he is hearing. Mr. Keprios replied it is his understanding that the Park Board would like staff to research what the costs are and resources needed to develop a community garden and also study what all is involved and needed to administer and manage a community garden program offering more so than where the garden is going to be located. Mr. Keprios stated that he will study the best practices used by other communities in administering a community garden program and the processes they use. Mr. Keprios also stated that he will solicit public input to gauge the need and desire for a community garden and ask for the community's general recommendations on the topic.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- C. Pamela Park Scoreboards and Batting Cage – Mr. Keprios gave a power point presentation on Pamela Park. He informed the Park Board the Edina Girls Fast Pitch Association (EGFA) has requested an additional batting cage and pitching tunnel basically for the safety and protection of anyone using the park. Mr. Keprios pointed out that EGFA recently came forward and have offered to donate money to put up three electronic wireless scoreboards. He showed the Park Board a picture of what they would look like. Mr. Keprios explained that as far as this donation goes it would need to be accepted by the City Council via resolution before they can move forward. Mr. Keprios indicated that he sent out letters and a map to all of the neighbors who live within 500 feet of the softball fields which ended up being approximately 75 households. He noted that to date he has received three e-mails and one letter to which none were favorable toward the project. Mr. Keprios explained that Pamela Park is characterized as a Community Playfield and it is the largest of eight community playfields in Edina. He noted that all of community playfields have at least one or more scheduled athletic activities such as soccer, football, baseball, softball and hockey.

Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that he did hear some comments that the process they used was inadequate and wasn't given to enough households and it wasn't time-wise long enough. He commented that if the Park Board agrees with that assessment and is not satisfied with the notification process then his recommendation would be to delay the decision at least on one, if not both, the scoreboards and batting cage/pitching tunnel projects.

Mr. Presthus asked if they would consider possibly doing just one scoreboard this year on field #1 where the high schools girls play. Mr. Keprios replied that he feels that could be a reasonable option worthy of consideration.

Mr. Sorem asked what the needs are for three scoreboards and asked if tournaments are held there. He also asked if all three scoreboards will be needed at the same time

and if it would be cost effective to install all three at once. Bruce Johnson, EGFA President, replied that since the fences were put in down the foul line last year that has improved the facility and made it safe. This summer they have two tournaments scheduled at Pamela Park. He also commented that when they host league games during the summer they can often have three games going on at the same time. Mr. Johnson stated that as far as cost this is a project they were thinking they might do as a partnership with the schools and possibly the school could contribute to it as well. He indicated he is not the treasurer but he knows they have the funding right now for one but most likely two. They do not have the funds to do all three this year.

Mr. Meyer stated that what he thinks he is hearing from the neighbors is that this is an aesthetics issue. He asked Mr. Keprios if they have looked at putting in some evergreens behind these or if they could try to do something to make it less intrusive as a part of the overall park. In addition he asked if the scoreboards could be mounted a little lower so they aren't quite as intrusive or obvious from someone walking by. Mr. Meyer noted that he is just looking to see if there are ways they could make it aesthetically a little more appealing or pleasant to the neighbors.

Mr. Peterson asked if they've thought about putting the three scoreboards behind the home plates and use it as a triangle labeled fields #1, #2, #3. Mr. Johnson replied that they would be open to looking at anything because the scoreboards do not need to be put in one specific location.

Karen Amundson, 5905 Oaklawn Ave., indicated that she has been an Edina resident for 42 years and commented how very disappointed the situation at Pamela Park has arisen and the lack of involvement with the neighborhood. She noted that the vast majority of her neighbors have not had any opportunities during the planning sessions to give any input whatsoever. Mrs. Amundson pointed out that black fences were installed at Pamela Park without the knowledge of this community knowing that it was going to take place. She also stated that beyond the aesthetics of the fence they have also noticed a big change in the lack of use relative to winter cross country skiing and other activities on the north end of the park due to the fence being installed. Ms. Amundson asked whether these changes were appropriate in light of how this is going to change the character of this neighborhood park. She explained that her concern is two-fold; was a fair process of review made available to residents to be viewed and second the merits of proposed changes. She commented whoever is on the task force committee representing the neighborhood have not been engaged with the neighborhood. Mrs. Amundson also noted that the minutes from the March 10th Park Board meeting stated "the mission is to hopefully get a consensus from the task force so that they will be ready to go out to the greater community to seek their input and invite them to the Park meeting", she stated that never occurred. In fact, this is the first invite in which they have been notified to express their opinion. She stressed that she is strongly opposed to the scoreboards being installed and in addition she has no idea how the park will be used and has no idea of any long-term plans, she added that her greatest fear is that this will virtually turn Pamela Park into a sports complex. Ms. Amundson informed the Park Board that she has a petition signed by approximately 50 neighbors on such short notice opposing the installation of these scoreboards. She requested that there be a time out so that neighbors can be heard.

Steve Aura, 5900 Oaklawn Ave., stated that he was surprised to get a letter that was mailed to only a handful of residents that live within 500 feet of the actual playing surface at Pamela Park. He noted that when he went back to the minutes of June 2008 it was noted there would be a meeting with the whole community to have their say regarding \$400,000 that would be put into the fields. He stated that it was also mentioned in the November 2008 minutes again that there would be a Pamela Park neighborhood meeting. He indicated that this is the first he has heard of any meeting to discuss this issue. Mr. Aura pointed out that for a 10 x 10 spot at Chowen Park notices were sent to people who live within 1,000 feet of that park. He commented that they never received a letter when they put in 3,000 feet of fence. He indicated that he thinks things are getting slid in little by little and before they know it there will be a big complex with scoreboards and lights. Mr. Aura stated he is asking for this to be put off a little bit until there is a system that involves the neighborhood people, not just the people who live near it but also the people who use the park and let them be heard.

Lawrence Anderson, 6012 Oaklawn, noted that he has lived across the street from Pamela Park for 11 years and considers it a huge privilege. He stated the thing that really appealed to them when they purchased their home was the openness of it. He commented that he thinks every one of the 759 houses that live within 1,000 feet of the park use and enjoy the park. Mr. Anderson commented that along with the privilege comes a trade-off because it is a multi-use park/community playfield but feels there is a good deal of balance right now. However, it does seem to get busier every summer. He noted when the park is busy there is a lot of traffic and he is concerned from a safety standpoint of kids running back and forth across the street. Mr. Anderson indicated that people in the general neighborhood treasure the park and therefore would ask that the Park Board really consider before they add scoreboards and before they change the character of the park because once those scoreboards are put in place there is no going back and when he hears the words "sports complex" it really concerns him.

Mr. Johnson commented that he has lived in Edina for 22 years and lives approximately six blocks from Pamela Park. He explained that EGFA does not want to turn the park into a sports complex and they do not want lights because it doesn't fit in that neighborhood and games can be finished before dusk. He noted that he likes the small community park feel as well. He pointed out that EGFA is just looking for some improvements to help their program and the high school's program. He added they are always open to discussion and when Mr. Keprios suggested the Pamela Park taskforce EGFA informed him they would like to sit in on those meetings and listen to as many of the neighborhood people as they could.

Dorvom Amundson, 5905 Oaklawn Ave., stated that he appreciates the games but he doesn't think there needs to be big scoreboards. He asked couldn't there be a chalkboard that someone could put the score on. He noted that it would save money and it would be a simple thing to do. He stated there are other ways of showing the parents what the score is.

Luanne Kuna, 6008 Oaklawn Ave., noted that she lives right across the street from Pamela Park and she thinks they need to think about their parks and preserve them to be parks and not try to commercialize them. She stated that she realizes there are community events that are happening at the park but when they start putting up electronic things that takes away from the general setting of the park and she feels they need to preserve that.

Mr. Hulbert indicated that there doesn't seem to be a problem with the batting cage and pitching tunnel. He noted that the issue just seems to be with the scoreboards and commented that he likes the idea of trying one scoreboard and see how it goes. He added that he also likes the idea of putting in some evergreens to make it more aesthetically pleasing and would like to come to some sort of compromise with the neighborhood.

Mr. Presthus stated that he would like to at least see them move forward with the batting cage and pitching tunnel at this time.

Mr. Meyer asked who would be using the scoreboards to which Mr. Johnson replied that EGFA because that is their primary location as well as the high school and EYSA. He commented that staff would know if there are any other groups that use it.

Mr. Meyer stated that it seems aesthetics is the biggest issue. He noted that he thinks there needs to be a little more homework done to look at where they need it, is there potential interference with other activities and just make sure that we put these in the right place as well as plant trees around them or behind them. Therefore, he thinks there needs to be a little more thought put into it and hear some input from the neighbors. He commented that if this is the path they want to go down they need to think it through and find the best alternative.

Mr. Lough pointed out that he has heard the words "aesthetic" and "sports complex" so in addition to everything that's been said to some degree he agrees with trying to find a compromise. He stated that he thinks it needs to be referred back to some group and try and work through what that compromise is.

Ms. Steel commented that as Mr. Johnson pointed out he's not sure they even have the money to go ahead with three scoreboards. Therefore, a little more of a concrete plan would be helpful.

Mr. Peterson indicated that he thinks the people and groups who use Pamela Park need to have a meeting. He noted that he is not qualified to determine whether it is 500 ft. or 1,000 feet but this group needs to talk about what their needs are and what the residents needs are and try to reach a compromise.

Mr. O'Connell asked if they've looked at portable scoreboards that could be on a trailer when games are in progress. Mr. MacHolda replied that was one of the options they presented to the Pamela Park task force and the issue was storage of those portable scoreboards.

Mr. Keprios first publicly apologized for the way the fencing was handled and noted that it was wrong and they won't make that same mistake again. He explained that the Park Board has tried to discuss a policy to try to address a proper notification process so that doesn't happen again.

Mr. Keprios explained that the way parks are getting developed now is there are competing interests groups that want more and want better, they want to be like their neighboring communities. However, it's not always as well received and accepted by the neighborhoods and noted that he understands both sides.

Mr. Keprios commented that now he would like to explain the purpose and history behind the task force which consisted of ten residents, three staff and three consultants. He pointed out that four of them are just residents at large who are users of the park who had an interest in helping decide acceptable parameters for the park from other interest groups. Mr. Keprios explained that the reason why everyone isn't notified at this stage in the process is because they need to at least get something on paper to then notify the greater community which is the next agenda item and after a few months get community input and move forward. Mr. Keprios pointed out that the reason this is on the agenda tonight for a decision is because it's been offered up as a donation and was not part of the plan from the start. He commented that the batting cage is funded to go into the ground this year as part of the Capital Improvement Plan and knowing that the neighborhood had not been notified of that park improvement yet, he felt they needed to include that as well. Mr. Keprios informed everyone that regarding all of the other plans; the neighborhood will be adequately notified and will be given a lot of time to provide feedback.

Mr. Keprios indicated that portable scoreboards might be an option and he would be happy to work with the user groups and neighbors to see if there is a compromise rather than have it become an "us" and "them" issue. Mr. Keprios asked the Park Board if they could delay the decision on the scoreboards and give staff a chance to revisit it and see if they can come up with an option that serves the competing interests.

Mr. Presthus MOVED TO RECOMMEND GOING FORWARD WITH THE BATTING CAGES AND PITCHING TUNNELS AND DO WHAT MR. KEPRIOS SUGGESTED FOR THE SCOREBOARDS. Ray O'Connell SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED.

- D. Pamela Park Task Force – Mr. Keprios went over some of the work the Pamela Park task force has done to date and noted that not much has changed. He pointed out that process-wise the plan is to get this information in a little better detail and in written form from the architect and with the help of staff to get it on-line so that the public can access it. He noted they would also like to get copies that people can come in and view. He would recommend notifying everyone who lives within 1,000 feet of the park as well as do a press release and then wait a few months to let the people get educated and involved because we want their opinion and input. Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that it will be awhile before any funding becomes available but they need a starting place.

Mr. Keprios indicated that he would like the Park Board to come to a consensus to give staff the direction to start putting a little more information together and get it on-line. He noted that he would like input from the Park Board on a notification procedure in how to address these. He noted that he would basically like to have a public input meeting (public hearing) in an October or November time frame.

Mr. Meyer suggested there be some basic dialog with the neighborhood that would be informational in showing the layout, process, etc. because there seems to be a lack of that. He noted that this way when people come to the hearing they will at least have some background as to what is going on. He suggested possibly even meeting at the park with the neighborhood to which Mr. Keprios replied he thinks that's a great idea.

Joseph Hulbert MOVED TO APPROVE STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO NOTIFY THE NEIGHBORHOOD AS PROPOSED INCLUDING A PRESS RELEASE AND PROVIDE INFORMATION ON LINE AND HAVE STAFF CONDUCT A CITIZEN INPUT MEETING AS PROPOSED. Dan Peterson SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Sorem commented that he wouldn't mind see it go out to the user groups as well. Mr. Hulbert added that amendment.

MOVED TO HAVE A COMMUNITY MEETING WITH RESIDENTS WITH USER GROUPS AND REQUEST THAT STAFF WORK ON ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS TO SHARE AT THE MEETING AS A POTENTIAL COMPROMISE.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Revisions to Relationship Document – Mr. Keprios reminded the Park Board that this was on an earlier agenda to which the decision was delayed until some research could be done to see if we would be well served to be in alignment to whatever the school districts policy is on the exclusion criteria for background check results. He explained that what he learned is that the school district really doesn't have one that addresses the issue and that they are dealt with on a case by case basis. Mr. Keprios stated that he would still like to go with his recommendation and follow the National Recreation Park Association guidelines that he and the athletic associations thought were appropriate so at least there is a time frame more specified for each crime.

Randy MEYER MOVED. Dan Peterson SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

IV. UPDATES FROM STAFF

- A. June 2009 Park Board Meeting – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that he just learned that the Finance Department has a rather aggressive Capital Improvement Plan process scheduled. He noted that he would really like to be at the June Park Board meeting when it is discussed and noted that he will be out of town on the date

of the Park Board meeting. Therefore, he asked the Park Board if everyone would be okay if they moved the June Park Board meeting to Wednesday, June 17th at 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers. Ray O'Connell MOVED TO HOLD THE NEXT PARK BOARD MEETING ON JUNE 17TH AT 7:00 PM. Randy Meyer SECONDED THE MOTION. Mr. Lough noted that he will not be able to attend on that date. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:15 PM