

Minutes of the
Edina Park Board
September 8, 2009
Edina City Hall, Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jennifer Kenney, Ben Pobuda, Todd Fronck, Dan Peterson, Jeff Sorem, Bill Lough, Rob Presthus, Randy Meyer

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joseph Hulbert, Keeya Steel

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Janet Canton, Ed MacHolda

I. APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 11, 2009 PARK BOARD MINUTES

Dan Peterson MOVED TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 11, 2009 PARK BOARD MINUTES. Mr. Lough stated there was an omission in the minutes concerning the discussion around the hockey rink lights for the Pamela Park renovation. He indicated that he would like the minutes to reflect that when he asked Mr. Keprios what the payback period would be for the investment in the lights Mr. Keprios replied that he wasn't sure but thought it might be approximately 13 or 14 years. He also asked Mr. Keprios if it was likely to be approved by the financial staff or the City Council with that kind of a payback. He noted that Mr. Keprios replied that, because the investment was green and the city had established a priority to make green expenditures or green investments, he thought it would be fine. He noted he would like the minutes to reflect that exchange did take place. Todd Fronck MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED BY MEMBER LOUGH. Dan Peterson SECONDED THE MOTION. MINUTES APPROVED.

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. Community Science Education Project Proposal – Mark Burman – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that Mark Burman, an Edina resident, is requesting permission to install a total of three 10" by 10" permanent metal plaques in Edina parks; one at Pamela Park, one at Centennial Lakes Park and one at Rosland Park. Mr. Burman informed the Park Board that he was trying to explain the solar system to his kids and found that you really can't explain it and it doesn't fit on a page in a book and so that is where this concept came from. Mr. Burman gave a presentation to the Park Board on what it is he is proposing to do which is to create a scale model of the solar system. He noted the planet sizes and distances from the sun will be accurate to the scale of 200,000,000:1 so that it will be able to fit within Edina and surrounding areas. He noted that he has branded this the "Nanoscale Solar System." Mr. Burman also handed out to the Park Board a written report with details of his proposal.

Mr. Burman pointed out that after doing the math he figured out that the best place to start would be with the sun at Concord Elementary. He noted that he has already spoken with Rick Sansted, Principal at Concord Elementary, who was very excited about it and have already given him permission to do it. Mr. Burman commented that after talking to Mr. Sansted they are working this into their fourth grade curriculum.

He indicated that he is here to talk about placing the planet Earth at Pamela Park, Mars at Rosland Park and Jupiter at Centennial Lakes. He noted that once they get to the outer planets they will leave the confines of Edina and move into Hopkins, Minnetonka and Orono.

Mr. Burman informed the Park Board that he would like to put a metal plaque that symbolizes these planets at each site which will show the distance to scale from the sun. He added that each plaque will also list facts about the planets and will give information on what you would need to know in order to continue the search.

Mr. Burman again stated that he is asking for the Park Board's permission to be able to place these plaques in the parks at the locations that meet the requirements. He pointed out that he is also requesting permission to include the sponsor's names on these plaques. He indicated that he has talked to Mr. Keprios about this and as long as the sponsor is a non-profit 501C3 organization it should work. He added that this will not be the Park Department's responsibility for upkeep. Mr. Burman stated that there will be a website for this with contact information for people who have questions.

Mr. Burman pointed out that he is trying to get approval from all of the sites so that he can get the plaque designs finalized because he currently has a quote from a company that's a pretty good deal. He commented that he would like to get these plaques mounted by winter.

Ms. Kenney asked Mr. Burman if he has approached the other school districts to which Mr. Burman replied that he has talked to all of the locations and is just waiting for their final approval.

Mr. Lough indicated that he thinks this is a marvelous idea and asked Mr. Burman if he has had an independent physicist or mathematician check his calculations. Mr. Burman replied he has had people check his math as well as he put it into an excel spreadsheet and multiplied it by the right scale.

Todd Fronek ENTERTAINED A MOTION TO APPROVE THE USE OF THE PARKS FOR THSE PLAQUES. Dan Peterson MOVED TO APPROVE. Bill Lough SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- B. Closing Strachauer Park and Countryside Park Skating Parks – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that staff has been directed by the City Manager to come up with some cost saving measures on the expense side of the equation to help them get closer to a balanced budget for 2010. He noted that of the many recommendations they came up with one was to suggest savings by closing two of the outdoor hockey rinks. Mr. Keprios explained that after looking at the conditions of the rinks and usage of the rinks as well as other reasons outlined in the staff report they came to the conclusion that it made the most sense to close the rinks at Strachauer Park and Countryside Park. He commented that by closing these two sites it would save the city approximately \$7,500.

Mr. Fronck asked Mr. Keprios to go over a little bit more why he would not close Todd Park as well as what other expenses were looked at to be cut. In addition, he asked Mr. Keprios what other thought processes he went through to come up with these two rinks? Mr. Keprios replied that Todd Park was considered by staff and noted that it can be considered tonight. He stated that Todd Park may have some labor savings by not having to put it up and take it down each year. However, building wise it is one of the newer facilities as well as it is better located and has a new energy efficient lighting system. He indicated that it does have some pluses with the exception that it does not have very good parking. Mr. Keprios stated that he thinks at some point this decision becomes subjective.

Mr. Sorem stated that he agrees they should keep the rink at Todd Park and they should close the rink at Countryside Park. However, with EHA having record numbers and especially the Mite program practicing outside, he would really hate to see a hockey rink close. Mr. Sorem asked Mr. Keprios if they ever thought about cutting out a day of flooding during the week. Mr. Keprios replied that is something they did consider but found that there are not any real true savings by not flooding or sweeping a rink during a weekday. He noted there are still warming house attendant costs and there are still labor costs that don't go away. Mr. Keprios pointed out where they could save dollars is if they didn't maintain the rinks on the weekend because they wouldn't need to pay the overtime.

Mr. Fronck asked Mr. Keprios to give them an idea of scheduling to which Mr. Keprios replied that what he has been told is that Strachauer Park has the least amount of scheduled use from the EHA.

Mr. Fronck asked Mr. Keprios if this is something they can delay or does he need a decision right now as far as what needs to be given to the City Council. Mr. Keprios responded that if the Park Board feels they need more information and more time to ponder this, then it can certainly wait until the October Park Board meeting. Mr. Keprios pointed out that he knows how sensitive it is when you close rinks and that the one thing they are not going to do is ask the public to come in and talk to the Park Board about this issue. He noted that the public's views can be heard during the City Council's process of the budget hearings. Mr. Keprios stated that he definitely wants the Park Board's input into the process of this particular cost savings proposal.

Mr. Sorem suggested that possibly they could raise the user fee for the EHA participants from \$9.00 to \$25.00. Mr. Keprios replied that he has been told for the 2009-2010 outdoor skating season the EHA is not planning on using any outdoor ice for any games, just practices. Mr. Sorem commented that most of the young teams have a standing weekly scheduled practice for the entire season and noted that \$9.00 is pretty cheap, it's a great deal.

Mr. Peterson asked Mr. Keprios what is the season right now because you stated you would like to reduce it to eight weeks. Mr. Keprios replied that is another part of the question which should give them a cost savings of \$9,000 which would come from warming house attendants and overtime spent on weekends going into late February. Mr. Peterson asked is that a two week decrease to which Mr. Keprios that all depends

on Mother Nature. Some years they are able to keep them open into March and other years they are done by the second week in February.

Mr. Meyer indicated that it seems to him there are enough questions or at least concerns that maybe they need more information and should table this until the October Park Board meeting.

Randy Meyer MOVED TO TABLE THIS UNTIL THE OCTOBER MEETING. Jeff Sorem SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Keprios asked the Park Board what other types of information they would like to have. Ms. Kenney stated that she likes Mr. Sorem's idea of raising the EHA fees for the season and asked if mathematically that would make any difference. Mr. Keprios indicated that he would be happy to talk to the EHA and see if they would be willing to come up with some money to keep these rinks open. He noted that whether it is in the form of a fee or just write a check he will approach it as a one-year or two-year proposal. Mr. Keprios stated that he will also come back with how many hours were scheduled practices and scheduled games in order to help make a decision.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Community Gardens Policy – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that the City Council denied their recommendation to have a small garden at Chowen Park. He noted that the City Council also directed staff to come up with a community gardens policy to help them address this in the future. Mr. Keprios reminded the Park Board that at the last Park Board meeting his recommendation was to not have a community garden in the parks because open space is extremely precious in Edina. He pointed out that the Park Board last month felt they needed more information before making a decision and asked him to study it a bit more and to at least come up with some options to consider.

Mr. Keprios indicated that he visited six different communities and all of the community gardens they offered which totaled ten. He pointed out that the City of Bloomington has one, Eden Prairie has two, Hopkins one, Minnetonka one, Richfield one and St. Louis Park four. Mr. Keprios explained that the most interesting thing he found is that two of the four gardens in St. Louis Park are not community gardens. At one of them the property was given to the neighborhood association by the City to maintain on their own at no fee. Therefore it's essentially those who live in the neighborhood that get first access to it and anything left over goes to the community, however, there has never been anything left over. He noted that basically the city provides nothing more than water and land. He added that of the ten community gardens he visited this one was the best maintained. Mr. Keprios commented that the other one that's been slated as a community garden is for an apartment complex and is not really open to the public. Apparently it was a deal that was made with the city a long time ago. He noted there really is no access to it other than for those who live in the apartments.

Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board if they were to put a community garden in Edina these are the three sites, in order, that he would recommend: Yorktown Park at the YMCA, Lake Edina Park and Pamela Park. He pointed out that the downside to Yorktown Park is that the earliest they would be able to do it would be 2011 because of the construction that is going on at the YMCA. Mr. Keprios explained that the Lake Edina area he is looking at is currently being mowed and maintained by the Park Department. However, it has very heavy peat soil and there is a lot of concrete in the ground that would have to be taken out. In addition, they would have to import some decent fertile soils to be appropriate for gardening. Mr. Keprios stated that lastly he would recommend putting in a 70' by 120' garden at Pamela Park that would be located in the south west corner of the parking lot. He noted that it would not disrupt the future plan to add that new athletic field that's under consideration.

Mr. Keprios explained to the Park Board that it's going to cost approximately \$16,000 to \$20,000 to bring in water service for a community garden. He noted that other expenses would cost an additional \$5,000 to \$10,000 depending on the size of the community garden. Mr. Keprios stated that, in addition, they would need to compost and have mulch bins as well as portable restrooms if they were to use the Lake Edina site. Mr. Keprios also commented that if they have to pay for water that will cost approximately \$1,200. He also noted that whatever it would cost for maintenance, equipment, labor and administrative expenses would be absorbed into the existing operating budget.

Mr. Keprios commented that if they were to go forward with a community garden in Edina he thinks one of the policies they may want to consider is to allow community plots to residents only. He noted that he thinks it should be done in a manner that includes the comprehensive process that is open to all residents on a first come first serve basis. Mr. Keprios also indicated that he thinks the community gardens should be limited to park areas that are predetermined by the Park Board and City council. In addition, he noted that he feels the community gardens should not be made available for commercial use by private for profit organizations.

Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that there is \$30,000 in the capital improvement plan to cover the costs and development for a community garden.

Mr. Keprios commented that he did ask the Garden Council what their feeling is regarding a community garden. He explained that the Garden Council's recommendation is that the only planting be by private individuals or groups allowed in Edina's Park which beautify the park and have been approved and supervised by the City Horticulturist. This is a condensed version of their policy/recommendation.

Mr. Meyer asked Mr. Keprios if he has come up with a recommendation as far as what kind of fees you would charge or how you would offset the costs incurred in implementing these gardens. Mr. Keprios replied that he chose not to further analyze and recommend that level of minutia or detail until the Park decides on the broader policy issue of whether or not to have community gardens and where they should be located. He stated that if the Park Board wants to move forward with this then he will take it to the next level.

Mr. Meyer asked Mr. Keprios in talking to the other communities it seems the fees are very minimal and asked if they are trying to offset the cost of water or are they just charging a fee so people have to pay something to use the space. Mr. Keprios replied all of the community gardens he visited appeared to be a subsidized recreation service.

Mr. Lough asked Mr. Keprios if he understands correctly that monies are currently available to do this within the next year or two as part of the budget process. Mr. Keprios replied that the Park Board did ask that \$30,000 be put into the capital improvement plan for 2010 specifically for community gardens. He noted that the City Council has not yet acted on it but have seen it and did not seem to have an issue with it.

Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board some of the problems these communities had with their community gardens were theft of vegetables, people not maintaining their site properly, vagrancy, not cleaning up at the end of the year and people planting in the wrong plots.

Mr. Sorem commended Mr. Keprios for his presentation and stated that he had no idea that the surrounding communities had these. He noted there obviously is a desire for these in those communities. However, he keeps coming back to the question is this the right time to be doing this especially when we are cutting out other activities that are currently already in place. He stated that he doesn't doubt this could be something that could be done in the future but spending \$30,000 to \$40,000 for a subsidized recreational service he just questions if this is the right time.

Diane Plunkett Latham, Past President of the Edina Garden Council, stated that she fully supports residents raising their own vegetables. She does not, however, support turning over scarce public property for residents use in growing vegetables. She pointed out that the typical Edina residential lot is 1/5 of an acre which affords more space than is achievable in any community garden or public property. Ms. Latham commented that most apartments, condominiums and townhomes have green space associated with them where they could easily provide their residents a community garden. Ms. Latham indicated that given the following three factors: it costs tens of thousands of dollars to set up a community garden; nearly all residents can easily have a site on their own property or their facilities property and lastly you can't really sustain urban agriculture unless many residents are growing their own vegetables as in the WWII Victory Gardens in their own yards. Ms. Latham stated that she opposes community gardening unless it is intended to beautify our parks and is approved and supervised by the City of Edina's horticulturist.

Mr. Peterson asked Mr. Keprios if anyone has ever thought about putting a garden on top of a building such as City Hall or the fire station. Mr. Keprios replied that is something he actually suggested when they were in the design process of the City Hall. He explained they are a lot more popular now than they were five years ago. He commented that if the City were to embark on some other new construction it might be considered. Mr. Keprios pointed out that with the load and weight limits on

the existing infrastructure it would be very expensive to retrofit and change the roof, it would be cheaper to do it in the ground somewhere.

Mr. Lough asked Mr. Keprios if it would be possible to adjust the wording on the policy that is being proposed and have it state “. . . The City of Edina will CONSIDER offering community gardens”. He commented that way they are not offering them right now but would consider offering them but not necessarily specify the circumstances under which that consideration would take place. Mr. Keprios stated to Mr. Lough that if you were to pose that to him as a question to staff his response would be you either have a community garden or you do not. By making a policy we will “consider it” is a non-decision in his view. Mr. Keprios stated that if the Park Board feels they need more information or community input or whatever process you would like he would be happy to do that.

Rob Presthus MOVED TO GO WITH MR. KEPRIOS INITIAL RECOMMENDATION NOT TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE COMMUNITY GARDENS.

Mr. Peterson indicated that we are a community that’s aging and a lot of people are moving into apartments, condominiums, and townhomes and with there being a big interest for fresh vegetables and flowers he is intrigued with the YMCA site. He stated that he would like to see a community garden at that site starting in 2011 and see what the appetite is for our fellow citizens.

Mr. Meyer asked Mr. Keprios if this is something they need to decide at this point regarding the Yorktown Park site. Mr. Keprios replied that 2011 is the earliest the site would be available assuming that the YMCA has their fundraising campaign complete in time to begin construction next year. He stated that if the Park Board does not feel comfortable making a decision tonight you don’t have to, but he would encourage the Park Board to make a decision sooner rather than later because the City Council may have a different view if they want to serve residents that may be requesting this and they may decide to take a different approach.

Mr. Fronek commented that there is a motion on the table to not pursue community gardens. Mr. Lough state how about “not pursue community gardens at this time” because he doesn’t agree with the idea that this is a non-decision. He noted that he understands this is not an ordinance but if we are going to verbally say we don’t agree with it we don’t want to pursue it and we are not likely to consider it in the future and he is not comfortable with it. However, if you add the phraseology “at this time” he will vote for it.

Rob Presthus AGREED TO AMEND HIS MOTION TO NOT TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE COMMUNITY GARDENS AT THIS TIME. Jennifer Kenney SECONDED THE MOTION.

IN FAVOR: Rob Presthus, Randy Meyer, Bill Lough, Jennifer Kenney, Jeff Sorem, Ben Pobuda, Todd Fronek NOT IN FAVOR: Dan Peterson

IV. UPDATES FROM STAFF –

- A. Aquatic Center - Mr. Sorem asked Mr. MacHolda to comment on the pool and asked if revenues were down somewhat. Mr. MacHolda replied that it was a down year not only for the Edina pool but for the neighboring pools as well. He commented that it was nice summer weather, unfortunately, it wasn't pool weather.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:22 PM.