

**Tuesday, June 18, 2024, 5:30 PM  
CITY OF MINNETONKA BEACH  
PARK COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Chair Kim Petersen, Vice Chair Laura Paine  
Commissioners: Dave Christiansen, Jolynn Gamble, Curt Holt, and Patty Rezabek  
**Absent:** Lucian Panait and Council Liaison Tracey Breazeale  
**Staff Present:** City Clerk Jane Burgess and Public Works Superintendent Jason Hilgers  
**Council Liaison:** Mayor Joe Pagano  
**Guests:**

Petersen opened the meeting at 5:30 pm.

**1. Minnetonka Beach Business**

**1.1. Approve Agenda – June 18, 2024**

Rezabek motion, Paine second to approve the June 18, 2024, meeting agenda. With all members voting in favor, motion carried.

**1.2. Approve Minutes – May 7, 2024**

Petersen requested changes and Burgess will make them as stated.

Holt motion, Gamble second to approve the May 7, 2024 meeting minutes as amended. With all members voting in favor, motion carried. Rezabek abstained due to meeting absence.

**2.1. Rules of Procedure – KP**

Petersen stated that each year the commission reviews the City's Rules of Procedures. She noted that if there is ever a Park Commissioner meeting with four or more commissioners, which is a Quorum, and the meeting must be properly noticed to the public by Burgess. Petersen added that she appreciates meeting attendance this year by commissioners, and at the August meeting a commission chair and vice chair will be elected for a one-year term.

**2.2. Administrative Calendar Review – LP**

Paine stated that the annual Civic Fun Run and Summer Picnic will be on July 21st. She added that Civic's Thursday Fundays will begin on 6/20. Paine added that Green Asset walk through inspections were completed. They discussed that the Ordinary High Water Level for Lake Minnetonka is 929.4 feet. Following the three-year drought with little snow this winter, the lake is now at 929.7 feet which is almost 4.32 inches above average.

**2.3. Draft Budget for Review for 2025**

Petersen stated that there is a rough draft of the proposed 2025 Park Commission budget in the packet. She requested that commissioners review it and add input at the August 6<sup>th</sup> meeting so the budget can be approved by both Parks and City Council.

**3. Operations**

**3.1. Operations Calendar Review – KP**

Petersen requested that commissioners review the Operations Calendar as there is a lot of work to do this summer. She pointed out that the green highlighted column is Parks, and the yellow column is Public Works.

**3.2. SPOC Updates**

**Hard Assets**

- Punch List – JH, LP

Hilgers stated that the new flagpole will be installed at City Hall soon, and said the Swim Beach will probably not have a flagpole as it is broken. Petersen asked Hilgers if he will fix the steps that are in bad shape at the Arcola Docks, and he stated that he will use CIP money. Hilgers repaired the storm door at the Margaret Dahl Library, and he left the hockey rink boards up for dogs to run inside them as those who use it asked if he would do that. Commissioners discussed dog poop and poop bags they see and Hilgers reported that there is dog poop everywhere in the City. They discussed moving the Arcola Docks and Woodbridge Rd. steps that go down to the Dakota Trail to the hard asset list in the future. Hilgers said there are actually five sets of stairs in the City. Docks 8-9 have stairs and Docks 2 and 3 as well. Petersen suggested that they be added to the Hard Asset list. They discussed the bench that Hilgers moved over to the library from over by Rezabek's house and how nice it is that is getting used as it wasn't before.

### **Green Assets**

- **Green Asset Inspection Results – KP, LP, JG**

Petersen stated that there is a lot of work to do. Gamble organized their inspections that took place over two days, and they walked through the City. They discussed that the Abdo Garden at City Hall is in great shape. The Lilac Shrub that was at the City Hall basketball court will be removed from the list as it is gone. They discussed that the Liza Creer Garden needs the most work now as it is 60% overrun and infiltrated with aggressive Snow on the Mountain which goes to seed, has a complex root system that can go six inches deep, and can grow to three feet tall. They discussed options for eradicating the Snow on the Mountain. Christiansen spent four hours pulling Snow on the Mountain at the library when the ground was wet from all the rain. He used claw tongs that were 6-7 inches long and turned it while pulling. He put down heavy mulch so that really helped. They discussed possibly paying \$25 an hour to a crew to pull the Snow on the Mountain but it must be done properly. Funds could be used for this project from the \$1200 in the Miscellaneous budget. Holt added that Gardens by Lynn would cost \$65 per hour per person for hand pulling only. They discussed saving the good plants, killing off the garden and starting over, and other options for eradicating Snow on the Mountain and decided to revisit it next month and perhaps agree on a plan.

- **Gardens and Planters (weeds and water) – LP, KP, CH**

Holt provided YTD budgeting and hours spent by Garden's by Lynn. They were budgeted for 2024 \$5000 for 75 hours for labor but it rounded off to 77 hours, and plant material was \$1050. The gardening team had a much better spring cleanup the year requiring less of their time at only 14.5 hours with no leaf removal like last year which took them 30 hours. The City has been invoiced from Lynn for all annuals for the year at \$1050, spring cleanup at \$942, 10 hours of labor for installation and miscellaneous cleanup was \$650. There has been \$1592.50 spent on labor so far this year or 32% of the annual budget or 24.5 hours out of 77 hours budgeted. They discussed that if eradication of the Snow on the Mountain takes place, it will have to be done again for a few more years as one time won't take care of it. The high volume of rain that has fallen has made this plant take off after laying low for a few years. They also discussed chemical treatment options, which need to be done by licensed people. Petersen stated that the most favorable option as they are already under contract is to use Gardens by Lynn managing their hours and utilizing the \$1200 Misc. budget. They would pull the plants and see how far they get. Holt will contact Lynn to discuss. A 3-4 inch mulch layer would then need to be applied. Christiansen said he would go check out the removal and let them know how it goes. There may be a recruitment effort as well.

Rezabek stated that there is Hosta by her house, which was a gift from a resident, for use in the City and Hilgers stated that he will dig up the Hosta if they want him to. There is Snow on the Mountain in that Hosta as well.

Petersen said the Russian Sage at Ray Peters needs to be trimmed back and Curt will check on it and have Lynn's crew do it.

They discussed that the playground at City Hall needs to be cleaned up. The Public Works Summer helper will help with that. It was suggested that the Ninebark shrub in back of City Hall be moved as it needs more room. Green screening around trash cart area was discussed for the future. Full shade mix could be tried in the back as well.

Petersen explained that they now have a framework for the new 2025 – 2029 Five Year Plan. They will delete water bags from line 23 as they are not efficient. The diseased Black Hills Spruce is past its Otten Brothers warranty as it was planted in October of 2021. They discussed various fungus' that are widespread with all the rain that has fallen and the City may need to spray some of the big Evergreens for them. They discussed City Arborist Manuel of Heritage working in the City as there is a \$500 budget for an arborist. They discussed determining the best time to trim birch this winter. The Gerry Boschwitz Maple tree is not doing well as it has a big scar perhaps from a deer which weakened the tree. They discussed using budgeted money to replace the half dead tree. They discussed using the tree planting budget to plant a healthy tree at the beach to replace that tree. Hilgers requested any extra tree planting money be used at the new Water Treatment Plant for trees.

Petersen stated that many of the Ash trees are fading now, and companion trees should be planted on Westwood and Northview Roads. They discussed throwing good money with EAB treatments after bad trees and the fact that Green Ash are considered noxious and exempt from the Tree Protection Ordinance. Hilgers stated that Public Works could use the extra money generated by not treating Ash trees as it is not money well spent as the Ash are going to die.

Pagano stated that he has read in the newspaper that other communities are giving up on saving Green Ash and are taking them down and planting new diverse trees. They discussed that Swim beach Park has a lot of Green Ash. Should the Ash treatment money be reallocated in CIP for tree removal and new tree planting? Pagano said expensive treatment of Ash will most likely be challenged in this difficult economic time.

Petersen would like guidance from staff for CIP money allocated to Ash treatments and how and if that can be changed and reworded to something else. Petersen will discuss this with Honey and Hilgers and see if there was a carryover from last year. Pagano said what isn't spent in CIP goes into City Reserves. Petersen suggested the creation of a Tree Management Fund in the CIP. Hilgers stated that the City has 50+ Ash trees, and 26 of 54 Ash trees were treated last year. None have been treated in 2024 as it is an every other year process. EAB doesn't show up for 2-3 years and it shreds the tree. When Hilgers sees an EAB tree he takes it down or tells the resident to take it down. Rezabek expressed concern for safety with potential trees falling and stated that the City forest is aging out so that is why this is part of forest plan as too much rain has followed two years of drought. They discussed lowering the treatment money budget for Ash trees as this is throwing good money after a bad cause. Jason explained they will look at it.

- **Native Plantings – CH**

Holt has now turned the new 600 sq. ft. Pollinator Garden in Lafayette Park over to Public Works and mowing according to the schedule is important. As expected, year one had spotty plants, the second year they creep and the third year they leap. Petersen stated that the garden looks amazing, and it is a carpet of new, healthy native pollinator plants. Holt stated that in Year One site prep was accomplished. In Year Two (2024) there should be regular mowing every month to 6 inches. He will reseed it this winter. Year Three (2025) more native perennials will begin to bloom.

- **Tree Plantings – PR**

Petersen stated that there will be more discussion about tree plantings later this summer. Hilgers and Rezabek discussed earlier the area where the Oaks are gone by Half Moon Park and Lafayette Park

and that a tree should be planted after stump grinding is complete. Petersen stated that Hennepin county has a great spring tree sale and the Maple Trees in that area are doing well.

- **Forest Restoration – DC**

Petersen stated there are areas on the hillside that look great and areas that don't look so great. Christiansen stated that there is a lot of Buckthorn from the warming house to the walking trail in the 3.5 acres of the Cedar thicket. This would be an expensive project. Petersen said this is included in the 5 Year Plan. They agreed that the South Entrance between Half Moon Park and Ray Peters Park should be weeded as it is full of noxious plants.

- **Turf – JH**

Hilgers stated that if the rain ever stops and the grass dries out he will be able to mow more.

- **Swim Beach and Docks (commissioner input) – LP**

Panait was absent but asked for commissioner input on the Swim Beach Docks. Petersen stated that many commissioners did not live here before the present Swim Beach dock and boat house system was put in place. The emphasis now is how can the system be more resident friendly. Rezabek stated when there were legal issues at Dock 10 modifications were made and docks added to the north side of the Swim Beach, and it grew after that. She added that back then there were no canopy boat houses. First the south fire lane at the beach added a canopy so many added them. The first two docks as you were looking out at the beach did not have canopies. Christiansen stated that he was on the Park Commission at that time and the changes Rezabek mentioned were made by a small group who essentially got what they wanted. The entire community was not taken into consideration when the expansions were made.

They discussed how this now could be fixed. There were three docks there when Rezabek moved here 55 years ago. They discussed what it would be like if docks were removed on the north side and some canopies eliminated. They also said those renters would need a place to go and perhaps attrition could take place. Petersen stated that it is beautiful at the Swim Beach when no docks and boathouses are in place and the beach is an asset to the entire community. Pagano stated that there is a need to restore the views at the Swim Beach and meeting minutes state that going way back in time.

They discussed the City's Comprehensive Plan and how it addresses safety and protection of swimmers at the Swim Beach. Pagano stated that Dock Committee Chair Steinke has been committed to finding a solution to the Swim Beach situation for the last two years. Pagano asked Park Commissioners to express their opinion if they agree by making a motion to support exploring a solution.

**Paine motion, Gamble second that on behalf of Park Commissioners' oath to protect, maintain, and improve the parks and public lands of the City of Minnetonka Beach for the safe use and enjoyment of all its residents, we support the City Council directive to the Dock Committee to draft a recommendation to restore the view at the swim beach, and improve safety for all using the swim beach. All ayes, the motion carried.**

**Administration & Financial**

- **Budget 2024 Review– KP**

Petersen stated that there is \$4250 budgeted for tree replacement yet this year. The Miscellaneous Fund has \$1250 which may be used for Gardens by Lynn for Snow on the Mountain removal in Liza Crear Garden. Buckthorn removal has \$1000 budgeted to direct Prairie Restorations as needed and where.

- **Grant Writing – PR, JG**

Rezabek spoke about her research obtained from the MCWD, LMCD, Water Patrol and Hennepin County. The grant has a rolling submission, but May 30<sup>th</sup> was the deadline which was missed. Hennepin County told Rezabek that there are resources for other grants that can be considered depending on the scope of the project. The Opportunity Grant will be in May of 2025, and she listed the other grant options. It's a work in process. The requirement of the application is very specific and detailed with cost breakdown by task. They will assist Rezabek when the time is right for the next application process.

Parks needs the council's approval to continue, and Petersen will present this at the July City Council meeting. Pagano added that the council is sensitive about grants, lack of success, and all the work involved to obtain grants. Petersen needs permission from the City Council to pursue it. Things to consider are does Public Works have the capacity to, for example, water the trees for three years with only one Public Works staff member. They discussed all the areas in the City that can benefit from grant money from restoration to preservation. The City Council will approve pursuing grants before proceeding.

- **Volunteerism: – JG**

Petersen stated that Gamble had a very successful Spring Cleanup event despite the heavy rain that fell while resident volunteers were cleaning up Swim Beach Park. A date for fall cleanup will be determined at the August 6<sup>th</sup> Parks meeting.

- **Resident Survey – LP**

Commissioners added input to the Resident Parks Use Survey, and it is ready to be mailed to residents included with the City's Utility Billing.

#### **4. FYI's**

##### **4.1. Resident Donation Consideration**

Pagano said he received a donation offer of a large half pipe skateboard/roller blade ramp from a resident and wanted Parks and Public Works to consider it. He sent the resident the City's Donation Policy which includes in it the following items for consideration: location of half pipe, the City's capacity to deal with it, the financial wherewithal for maintenance of it over time, and transporting it to the City from their primary home in Medina. Pagano added that other things to consider are does this fit with what the City offers residents, would adjacent neighbors like it, and it would be a ramp for us by the general public. Hilgers stated that the half pipe would need to be on concrete which we don't have in place for it. It would have to be broken apart to move it, maintaining it is not in the budget, it would create a lot of noise and bring in users from other communities. Hilgers concluded that it is a cool half pipe, but it is not right for Minnetonka Beach.

**Christiansen motion, Holt second that after Park Commission's review of the City's Donation Policy, we thank the resident donor for this generous offer of a half pipe, but at this time the Park Commission respectfully declines this offer. All ayes, the motion carried.**

##### **4.2. Tree Ordinance Evaluation**

Petersen stated that comments are still coming in from residents regarding the Tree Protection Ordinance.

##### **4.3. July is Parks Month**

Petersen told commissioners to get outside and enjoy the parks.

#### **5. Commissioner and Liaison Comments**

Pagano thanked the Park Commission for the opportunity to participate at this Park Commission meeting as Council Liaison in Tracey's absence. He was very impressed with the commission's enthusiasm, attendance, passion and willingness to pick up a shovel. He recommended determining the areas of work where things might be eliminated that require more hands and work than you have. He referenced the 5YP for 2025-2029 where particular hard and green assets can be removed. He added that their 5YP Plan focuses on restoration and maintenance of green wooded areas is spot on as the City has been challenged by disease, drought, age, and that effort will benefit residents 50+ years down the road.

#### **6. Closing Comments and Adjournment**

**Holt motion, Rezabek second to adjourn the June 18, 2024 Park Commission meeting. With all members voting in favor, motion carried.**

**The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.**

**Public in attendance:**

**Respectfully submitted,**

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**Jane Burgess, City Clerk**