

City of Inver Grove Heights Minutes of the Proceedings  
Of The Park and Recreation Advisory Commission  
**Wednesday, July 13, 2016**

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Eiden called the July 13, 2016 Park and Recreation Advisory Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Chair Al Eiden; Vice Chair Kevin Sethre; Commissioners: Joe Boehmer, Patrick Farley, Kathryn Bauer, Willie Krech, Jim Huffman, and Deb Tix

Parks and Recreation Director Eric Carlson

**Absent:** Commissioner Mark Freer; Recording Clerk Sheri Yourczek

• **PRESENTATIONS:**

**A. MRPA Award of Excellence for the Lawn of the Week Program**

Parks and Recreation Director Eric Carlson stated the Minnesota Recreation Park Association is here to do a presentation on an Award the City of Inver Grove Heights received for the Lawn of the Week Program that we do during the summer months.

Jill Anfang stated she is here tonight to present the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association 2015 Award of Excellence to the City of Inver Grove Heights.

The Minnesota Recreation and Park Association, (MRPA), was formed in 1937 to foster the growth and development of the Parks and Recreation profession throughout the State. There are nearly 900 professional, corporate, board, commission, student, and retiring members. Members come from municipal, county, state, district, commercial, and private agencies. The MRPA office is located in Fridley. The awards program is an annual program of the Minnesota Recreation Park Association that was solely created to recognize agencies and their staff for extremely exemplarily projects that was either implemented in 2015 or received substantial revisions in 2015. Projects may be nominated in seven different categories. They are:

- Parks and Facilities
- Programming and Events
- Sustainability
- Communication
- Administrative Management Strategies
- Volunteer Initiatives
- Scholarships and Partnerships

Nominations received are reviewed, evaluated, and scored by awards committee members. Top scoring nominations are selected to receive awards. On behalf of the committee it is her pleasure to present the Award of Excellence to the City of Inver Grove Heights in the Parks and Recreation Department for its winning project, Lawn of the Week in the Programming and Events Category. We would also like to recognize Jen Graham, Recreation Coordinator, who nominated this project for an Award of Excellence.

This is a really cool and unique program. We haven't seen this program before. She wanted to read one of the recommendations that was part of the application. The following says a lot for the Community and the program.

"The best looking lawn in all of Inver Grove Heights belongs to Jerry Lane. It probably even looks good now, in March, half covered in snow and dead leaves from winter. It will definitely look amazing this summer. How do I know? It's looked like Astroturf for the entire twenty plus years he has lived here. He aerates, power rakes, trims it with scissors, and he re-turfs bald spots. Putting greens don't look this good. The boulder look of landscaping is in. He put them all around his house, picking them up one by one from farm fields around the City back in 1990. He's planted a forest of ferns in his backyard where no one could ever see them. If I had a nickel for every time someone has asked him for

lawn advice or has said, if there was an award for best lawn he would win it and she'd be a very rich woman. Not only that, he's a great neighbor. Always cutting the neighbors lawn, plowing their snow, helping them with projects, etc. You'd have to look at both the front and back yard, but if there's a more perfect patch of lawn in this City, I'd be extremely surprised. I hope you consider him".

That is just one example, but there are others in here like it. The Award of Excellence includes a plaque. Thank you again for this honor.

Recreation Coordinator Jen Graham accepted the plaque.

Chair Eiden asked if this is a statewide contest? The State of Minnesota Park and Recreation.

Ms. Anfang responded that is correct.

Chair Eiden asked if her experience would be that other Communities would pick up similar types of programs based on what they read about the award winners and categories?

Ms. Anfang responded definitely. The information is shared with organizations throughout the state. She wouldn't be surprised if Coordinator Graham doesn't get a phone call or two once this information is out. Modeling is a great compliment.

Recreation Superintendent Tracy Petersen stepped forward to take a photo of the entire Commission, Jill Anfang, and Jen Graham, along with the Award.

Director Carlson thanked Ms. Anfang for coming this evening. They really appreciated it. He also congratulated Jen Graham.

**4. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- A. You can find information regarding the City of Inver Grove Heights by visiting our web site at: [www.invergroveheights.org](http://www.invergroveheights.org)**
- B. Find us on Facebook at Inver Grove Heights Parks & Recreation**
- C. Follow us on Twitter at @IGHParks**
- D. Next Meeting: August 10, 2016. Regular Meeting 7:00 p.m.**
- E. July is Parks & Recreation Month – Get out and enjoy our parks and trails**

**5. CONSENT AGENDA:**

- **Approval of Agenda**
- **Approval of Minutes of June 8, 2016**

**Motion to approve the Consent Agenda by Commissioner Farley, seconded by Vice Chair Sethre.**

**Aye: 8**

**Nay: 0      Motion carried.**

**6. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

**7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

None

**8. REGULAR AGENDA:**

None

## **9. ADMINISTRATIVE PRESENTATIONS:**

- **Park & Recreation Sub Committee Reports**

Chair Eiden stated the citizens that are planning a dog park have tabled their activities for the moment, but want to stay in touch.

Director Carlson responded that is correct. He has received an email from Carol Nankivel, she was the leader of the resident group that was looking at a dog park in the Community. The letter states they put effort into the concept of bringing a dog park to Inver Grove Heights. They feel there is support within the Community to have a dog park eventually somewhere here. The letter references the different sites they have researched and offers pros and cons to those sites. At this time they don't feel like they have the site they would like to pursue. For that reason they are putting it on hold and want that information to be available when and if it ever gets restarted again.

Vice Chair Sethre felt she laid out the pros and cons rather nicely. Someone obviously spent some time with this and that is really appreciated.

Chair Eiden asked if there were any updates on Inver Wood Golf Course?

Commissioner Farley responded as far as the golf course, things are moving along. There will be a meeting this coming Friday to get more information as they are getting closer to actual construction beginning in August. The course will be open, but it will be spotty at best. Due to that, they have reduced the rates to accommodate golfers with the understanding that the conditions are going to be construction like conditions. The driving range will shut down August 3<sup>rd</sup>. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of this month, they have gadfly golfers showing up. They are the Minnesota Golf Association Senior Tour. He calls them the gadflies because they travel all over the state in various groups to play various courses. They talk, so if they like a course they will talk about it and bring people to play it. That of course, is a good thing. He hopes it all goes well. He's looking forward to a good showing on the basis of the course. He thinks it will be a good opportunity to show off the course. It will be even better next year when everything is done and reconstructed.

Chair Eiden liked that the managers put out a good notice about what was happening there.

Commissioner Farley agreed. He meant to make notice of that.

Chair Eiden stated the Northwest Area Park Planning sub-committee will be getting together in August or September.

Director Carlson commented that they are waiting for some easement information. They will sit down with that group and look at specific parcels to look at for parkland.

Chair Eiden asked about short term staffing needs.

Director Carlson will meet with that group in September. It is related to the budget process.

Chair Eiden stated he has not done much work on the Total Park and Recreation System Plan. He hopes to get started in a month or so.

- **Department Happenings**

Director Carlson had nothing to highlight and will stand by for questions.

Commissioner Farley read the comments from people that responded to the request for ideas. He thought it was an appropriate comment that the play area be given more visibility than it currently enjoys. That would reduce vandalism and improve sight lines.

Chair Eiden stated that item will be under discussion in the next agenda item.

Chair Eiden asked about the Utility Roundup Program. Did the Council did in fact show interest in that?

Director Carlson responded that we presented that to them during the July work study session. The City Council was receptive to the concept. They do want to see some things looked into and changed, such as giving residents options as to when and how to make their donations. It was the general consensus of the Council that they didn't want people to sign up and have it be on there permanently. They wanted it to be more of a quarterly option. That is something the Finance Director and himself are looking into. They will be bringing that item back to them in August or September.

Chair Eiden stated on August 2<sup>nd</sup> it will be Night to Unite. The Park and Recreation staff will be available to provide games and hand out fun stuff at any Night to Unite gathering on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Those interested can apply online at [www.invergroveheights.org](http://www.invergroveheights.org) to let the staff know of your interest.

Director Carlson commented the block parties themselves are coordinated with the Police Department and then as Chair Eiden mentioned, if the block parties want to have Recreation staff come and run some games for the kids that are in attendance, they need to let our staff know so they can get on a list. Four or five different staff groups can then provide a little entertainment for those block parties. It has been very well received. We have had about 30 to 40 per year.

- **Discuss Master Plan Process for North/South Valley Park(s)**

Chair Eiden stated in your packets is a memo that he sent to the Director and others after the sub-committee had a tour. He tried to outline a planning process. He thinks this is a major project that has a lot of opportunities. He took the park situation and recategorized it according to his perception about what they can do. The first couple pages are the amenities, and they don't include our athletics. The reason for that is because they seemed to have focused on that in the past. There are things we could take better care of and make more useful, for example, out at Seidl's Lake Park. It has 26 acres of land. There is a lake there, but it is difficult to get down to. The actual playset is in a position for full use. He thinks South Valley has great opportunities to establish more unique opportunities in this City. There were a number of people for input sources where we could have a meeting. There are no Athletic Associations at this juncture. This is a starting point for the sub-committee to be working with. We can let the full Commission get a preview of what has been going on. The sub-committee took a tour of five parks a few weeks ago. It gave insight into shelters. We noticed ours is about ¼ the size of most of them. That has been a concern as we have had to turn people away as we don't have enough room down there. The sub-committee consists of Commissioners Boehmer, Bauer, Huffman, and himself. He also noticed we have much more water access in this Community than he had anticipated. We also have a lot of unique things in this City in terms of Parks. Maybe we should educate people more on the ability to use them. Harmon Park and Salem Hills Park for example, has a community garden and a tree farm. Those are things that we as citizens should know more about.

Vice Chair Sethre felt the basic premise is to look beyond the athletic amenity for this park.

Chair Eiden stated there is also a small softball field down there. It's marked as a softball field. We have a lot of athletic fields around here. He felt instead of an exact dedicated field down there; maybe have a grassy area multi-use turf that could be used for whatever they wanted. It doesn't need to be designated as any specific field down there.

Commissioner Boehmer asked if we are really turning people away because that shelter is too small. He went on the park tour too and felt it was good to see the other side.

Director Carlson responded we do have groups that are looking for a corporate or larger event, and our shelter doesn't accommodate the needs for some of their outings.

Commissioner Krech asked how much rent they get from that facility? He has seen an event held down there where there must have been 500 people and the biggest problem was the parking.

Vice Chair Sethre has that rented in August and thought 60 was the max.

Recreation Superintendent Tracy Petersen responded in a general year they are taking in about 60 to 70 rentals at South Valley. Those are rentals that are booked with the City. There are other rentals that take place that we are not aware of. They are rented in five hour blocks. You can rent from 11-4 or a 5-10 timeframe. The fee is \$60.00 for resident or \$80.00 for non-residents. It's not much money, but with a new facility, those rates could change.

Commissioner Krech asked if you checked other sites for costs of their facilities and their useages?

Superintendent Petersen stated they haven't gone that far yet, but if you look at the Rock Island Swing Bridge we had to keep the resident and non-resident rates the same because it was a County project. It is smaller but we are charging \$100.00 for that same block of time. It's a very reasonable rate. We are probably in the middle of surrounding communities, some are lower, some are higher, fees vary based on the size of the shelter and time frames too.

Commissioner Krech felt if you put an investment out there are you going to get any return in that? What you are charging them for five hours or half a day, we really aren't making anything on it.

Chair Eiden stated the sub-committee will be meeting to pursue some of these avenues. We just wanted the full Commission to understand that this is a great opportunity, and maybe more complex than we expected it to be.

Commissioner Boehmer was impressed with how many acres South Valley was.

Vice Chair Sethre agreed.

Commissioner Krech agreed that was a big area, but the biggest issue was the parking.

Commissioner Farley stated we have more opportunities than we have the money for. He asked about the water areas Chair Eiden mentioned around the Community that some may not know about. Is this water for sightseeing, boating, fishing, swimming?

Chair Eiden doesn't know the specifics on that yet.

Commissioner Huffman was impressed with the Rosemount splash pond for the young ones.

Commissioner Krech commented that we lost a great helper last week with the passing of Jim Metzen. He helped build a program for hockey arenas around town. The Mighty Ducks helped a lot of arenas in the State of Minnesota. It takes a lot to do that. It's like Swing Bridge Park; it took a lot to get that going too.

Chair Eiden commented that if you start looking for the money first, you are not going to get anywhere. If you look at what could be, and ways to get it done, and have the enthusiasm to do it, then along the way things will happen. Funding will always be an issue.

Commissioner Krech did have someone go down there to look at the blocks on the North Valley building and it would be about \$3,000 to \$5,000.

Commissioner Farley asked if we have that kind of money in the budget?

Director Carlson responded yes, but it would be depend on the Master Plan outcome.

- **Discuss Arbor Pointe Playground Equipment**

Chair Eiden stated this item came to their attention due to vandalism that couldn't be totally erased. There has been some discussion and we need to figure things out. We have about six options that you can choose one or more of. One of them could be using a cleaner that Commissioner Boehmer was going to find out more information on.

Commissioner Boehmer said he hasn't heard back on that yet.

Chair Eiden said another option would be to do nothing. Another option would be to replace it with a new set.

Commissioner Krech asked if there is enough use for that?

Chair Eiden wasn't sure.

Another option would be to remove it and not do anything. The last option would be something that the neighbors there have suggested and that would be repurposing that area.

Commissioner Krech felt they should have a camera put on the facility so you can arrest the problem. Maybe all parks need that? There was another park we did that for and it took awhile, but it worked.

Commissioner Huffman felt we should have the neighborhood involved and see what they want to do. They can give us ideas.

Commissioner Boehmer said they were talking about making it more viewable. When you go up there, you have all those homes and all those windows, there is visibility for those that live there and see that area. The camera could be good.

Chari Eiden stated this came to us as something as simple as a playset issue, but now we have many more options to consider.

Commissioner Farley said one of the respondents, named Wendy, made reference to the fact that there is only about 75 K-6 school age children within a half mile radius of the park. That to him, seems like a low number of individuals in that area. Repurposing may be more appropriate at the present time. How many of the surrounding homes are occupied by older individuals that may have grandchildren and may be using that park as a recreational facility, that were not included in those numbers though?

Commissioner Krech felt that number was more normal. This is just a playground. Other parks have a playground and ball fields.

Director Carlson commented that as you may recall, we sent out a letter and invited residents that live in the Arbor Point neighborhood to an open house. One person showed up. That was the extent of the feedback from residents. In the letter we sent out, based on data from 2014, there were 74 kids of K-6 grade age that live within a half mile of that park. That's where the 75 came from.

Commissioner Bauer said they did also talk about taking down the equipment and seeing what we hear from people too. She has heard comments that it is kind of hidden from the road too yet.

Vice Chair Sethre thought he had heard that that equipment could be at its end of useful life.

Commissioner Tix didn't think it being away from the road would be a bad thing. When taking a child to the park she'd want it to be away from the traffic that's going by. She grew up off Highway 52 so not having traffic noise is always a good thing for her. There can be benefits and negatives to that. If you got rid of the hill, you'd have to have a fence so kids can't run out on the street. With the hill it's a little easier to keep them contained.

Vice Chair Sethre commented that the vandalism must occur at night since there are so many homes visible there.

Commissioner Krech felt that a camera was the only choice. He knows that from his company. They have to get them on camera so they can get their truck number. Then the police can arrest them. You can't do anything today without cameras.

Director Carlson didn't think the cameras were a bad idea, but the situation at that park, or any other park, is a little bit different than what you might have at your business because you have people that are probably driving up, so you can get a license plate number. At Arbor Point Park, you are not going to see someone drive up in a car and see a license plate as they spray paint. You are probably talking about teenagers, in the dark, who do what they do and then leave. It could be more challenging to identify who is doing it even though a camera is installed.

Commissioner Huffman wondered how much the equipment would cost to replace, and the cameras. Who will pay for the cameras and the playground equipment?

Commissioner Krech felt the cameras were the cheaper investment. It would have to be able to take a pretty good picture if it was there.

Commissioner Boehmer commented that maybe those writing letters didn't have kids or grandkids. Maybe they don't like the noise there. We don't know that. This is a park though, and he thinks a playground should be there.

Commissioner Farley agrees with Commissioner Boehmer that it is a playground. He thinks not only about the children in the area using it, but there could also be grandchildren involved. Unless we have evidence that it needs to be repurposed it needs to stay the way it is.

Commissioner Krech felt maybe we could clean it up better. Commissioner Boehmer agreed.

Commissioner Farley felt we needed to have a more serious proposal about cameras.

Commissioner Krech felt if we put cameras on light poles in yards, thieves can see them. They do not rob from the vehicles that the cameras are near. They avoid anything where a camera can see. Kids may not be quite that smart.

Chair Eiden asked if it could cost about \$40,000 to \$50,000 for a playset?

Director Carlson agreed.

Chair Eiden felt we should try to clean up what's there for now. Secondly, since it's at the end of its useful life on paper, we have to look at the actual equipment to see how it is.

Commissioner Krech suggested we clean it up. Put a camera there just to see how many kids show up to use the park. Just get a game camera. They are \$100.00.

Commissioner Boehmer commented about game cameras. You can program them on your iPhone. If someone

goes to steal that camera, it's programmed on that iPhone.

Commissioner Tix felt if we were going to do something like a camera, what about motion detector lights? If they are kids, and they don't want to be seen and think they are sneaking around, the thought of someone seeing them could deter them as well.

Chair Eiden said he has heard a few things here. Clean it up, get a camera, and get a usage count. After we get the results, we can revisit again and decide what we want to do.

Vice Chair Sethre asked if you can customize them? Because if someone is there for an hour and a half you may see the same kids there for an hour and a half.

Commissioner Boehmer commented a camera could take a thousand pictures on eight AA Batteries, and last two months. There are all kinds of settings. He has some extra game cameras they can use.

Commissioner Farley said they are portable so we can move them from parks to parks. Then we would be able to determine the utilization rate at various times.

#### **10. COMMISSION COMMENTS:**

Commissioner Farley has no comment.

Commissioner Boehmer had no comment.

Commissioner Huffman had no comment.

Commissioner Bauer thought that the sub-committee tour was really a good idea for us to not only get out and see some of the amenities, but also to see what is working well and successful.

Commissioner Tix stated the latest craze since last Friday has been Pokemon Go. It is getting people up and motivated to try to find Pokemon. For those at home that do play, we are a gym at City Hall. The parks that she has gone to have something in them. This is done on a Smartphone.

Commissioner Krech thinks we are going the right way for this little park. Commissioner Boehmer may have some chemicals that can clean that up and he also has some really cool ways of setting up those game cameras. He thinks this is a good effort. We can try it at this one park and see how it works.

Vice Chair Sethre has no comment.

Chair Eiden stated there are a lot of things coming up in the City. You know the websites and other resources to get more information. Inver Grove Heights Days is September 9<sup>th</sup>. Our next meeting is August 10<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Krech thought the BEST Foundation at the Golf Course was coming up too.

Director Carlson stated that is on for Monday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

#### **11. ADJOURN**

**Motion by Commissioner Farley, seconded by Commissioner Boehmer, to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m.**

**Aye: 8**

**Nay: 0      Motion carried.**

