



MEETING NOTES

Rochester Parks & Recreation Master Plan – Advisory Committee Meeting #6

May 19, 2016

5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Park Maintenance Building at 403 E Center St.

Attendees:

Park Board Members Vern Yetzer, Larry Mort; Advisory Committee Members Randy Thomas, Ed Hruska, Michael O'Connor, Bari Amadio, JoAnne Judge-Dietz, Amy Eich, and Dee Sabol; Rita Trapp and Jess Vetrano from HKGi; Mike Nigbur and Paul Widman from City of Rochester.

1. Meeting Introductions & Welcome

The meeting was kicked off by Rita Trapp of HKGi. The purpose and agenda of the night's meeting were reviewed.

2. Approval of Advisory Committee #5 Notes & Recommendations

Advisory Committee members were asked if there were any changes to the notes or recommendations from the previous Advisory Committee meeting. It was suggested that the wording "schools aren't acting public" should be altered to clarify intent that school land is not utilized the same as public park land. It was also suggested that the notation about RASC should be modified to provide more clarity.

3. Review Community Engagement Process

Attendees provided feedback regarding the depth and effectiveness of the community engagement process. Some concerns were raised surrounding the quantity and quality of input received, as well as the diversity of the participant demographics.

Specific comments included:

- The diversity council has received slow input responses due to group attendance and schedules, as well as the volume and complexity of information provided (people felt that the plan was too far along for additional input to be valuable).
- General consensus was that engagement efforts did not reach underrepresented populations as desired. It was noted that it was much easier for folks to provide input in the beginning, more information gathering stage of the project rather than this more complex, review of the recommendations stage.
- Concerns were raised that the survey results do not adequately represent Rochester's diverse population due to self-selective nature and low response count
- It was noted that engagement in recent planning processes have been challenging. Successful engagement is more of an ongoing effort and can involve considerably more time than was budgeted for in this process.

- Make sure the plan includes efforts to reach out to diverse groups for input opportunities regarding future implementation or planning

4. Changes to Recommendations Based on Input

As the majority of the draft recommendations have been reviewed by the public and Advisory Committee at this point, the consultants presented potential changes based on input received thus far. Members were fine with the re-ordering of the Guiding Principles.

The following comments were made surrounding park system quality, facilities, and trails:

- If the quality of the park system is going to improve there needs to be more volunteer hours and money
- The list of important parks and park amenities is skewed by the ~200 people who chose to take the survey and care about parks
- Better communication surrounding the cost of providing better amenities and facilities
- When using trends from peer cities as a guide, make sure those cities are in Minnesota rather than from other states
- Consider integrating survey results from DMC parks and recreation planning process
- Take the dollar amount out of the policy language to keep it relevant in future years
- Simplify flier language to reach larger audience

5. Areas of Need

Updated maps identifying potential areas of need were discussed. A suggestion was made that in the future that buffers should consider uncrossable areas (i.e. busy streets, rivers, etc.) when displaying amenity access. Additionally, it was noted that the southeast portion of the City is extremely lacking in amenities and access to existing amenities within other zones. The proposed changes to the recommendations were deemed appropriate.

6. Prioritization

The consultants then launched a discussion regarding the prioritization of certain recommendations over others, and especially how they should be organized in the plan.

Comments regarding prioritization surrounded facilities, trails, marketing, and programming and events:

- Facilities
 - Relocation of maintenance facility seems more of an operations issue
 - Aquatics – take off of the City’s to-do list and focus more on privatization for that issue
 - Cannot do aquatics without considering current private facilities
 - Based on the feedback from the initial survey – modernization/user amenities is a high priority. Maybe should be separated
 - What about the golf course club houses?
 - Tennis?
 - We don’t own the land for many of our facilities – make a policy about investing in owning land
 - Separate cascade and gamehaven – very different issues
- Trails
 - Do you have a plan/priority for trails?
 - Get back to what we have and get it to a suitable condition

- Maintenance plans are already in place
 - Connectivity is an issue, but we don't control trails outside of our jurisdiction
 - City wants to focus on what trails are within the parks and making them great
 - Partnerships with PW would need to occur to address gaps – Parks and PW meet every year toward this goal
 - State money “bundle project” through DNR
 - Small segments in multiple places that are bundled together to meet thresholds to get funding outside of P&R
 - Current connectivity levels are quite high – exemplify that condition is the issue that needs focus
 - Trails exist (natural surface) that are not in the current database
 - Connecting to Olmsted County Parks via trails – incorporate county stance on parks and rec within plan?
- Marketing
 - Does the parks and rec department have a marketing person? You can't do this without one
 - The city doesn't have one
 - An intern could be a consideration
 - Partner with the DMC? Can't market Rochester as a beautiful/healthy place to visit without talking about the park system.
 - Retain all of the tasks as a priority as this is a 20 year plan
 - Success of this project depends very heavily on the success of marketing
 - “Raise public...value of natural areas” – broader statement addressing the positive impact of the entire park system – could be separate bullet
- Programming/Events
 - We don't have a lot of staff available for these tasks – accentuate partnership nature of some of these strategies
 - Some things are already happening along these lines that are just currently not marketed because they are being led by other people
 - If other people are in charge why should parks be involved?
 - Marketing
 - Ensuring their coverage is appropriate
 - Staff needs to coordinate partnerships
 - Currently good at doing one day/annual events – not enough staff available to do daily/weekly events
 - Do you do outreach to groups, or do they come to the City?
 - No real strategy in place as of now
 - Brainstorming around bringing in new groups along with keeping current relationships alive
 - “Annual event” sounds more like a metric rather than a strategy

- Work on responsibility wording to clarify roles
- Where does maintenance fit?

7. Budget and Financing Recommendations

With limited remaining time in the meeting, the planning consultants provided a brief overview of the budget and financing recommendations. Further discussion of this topic will be part of the next Advisory Committee meeting.

Initial feedback included:

- Identify what other cities are doing to generate revenue
- Include parks and recreation statistics regarding what has been done with expenditures over time per capita – could suggest a decline in support of parks per capita over time
- City needs an additional staff position if fee-based programming is to be offered
 - There could be an entire tier of population served being missed because there is no staff member focused on programming
 - Should adding a staff member be included in the recommendation?

8. Next Steps

- a. Survey monkey about prioritization to be completed by next meeting.
- b. June 23 Advisory Committee meeting