

EDINA PARK BOARD MINUTES
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1997
7:30 P.M.
MANAGER'S CONFERENCE ROOM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Andy Herring, Phyllis Kohler, Jean Rydell, Beth Hall, David Crowther, John Dovolis, Jim Fee, Bill Jenkins, Andrew Montgomery

MEMBERS ABSENT: Becky Bennett, Mike Burley

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Ed MacHolda, Janet Canton, John Valliere

OTHERS PRESENT: Gary Zachman, Pete Anderson, Gayle Gaumer

I. APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 18, 1997 PARK BOARD MINUTES

Jean Rydell MOVED TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER 17, 1997 PARK BOARD MINUTES. Phyllis Kohler SECONDED THE MOTION. MINUTES APPROVED.

II. 1998 MGA WOMEN'S MID-AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Keprios stated that Mr. Valliere has made a request to the Park Board to support his recommendation to host the 1998 MGA Women's Mid-Amateur Championship at Braemar Golf Course.

Mr. Valliere explained that basically each golf course takes a turn, so to speak, in hosting golfing events throughout the state. He indicated that last year was the first Women's Mid-Amateur Championship and it was held at Fox Meadow. Mr. Valliere stated that a lot of women play golf at Braemar and feels they would enjoy watching this great golf event. He pointed out that golf courses donate their facilities when they host these types of championships. Mr. Valliere explained that this event will be a minor inconvenience for some players on Monday and Tuesday but feels the golfers will understand.

Mr. Montgomery asked when was the last time Braemar hosted a similar tournament and it was noted approximately nine years ago Braemar hosted the Men's Senior Championship. Mr. Valliere also noted that Braemar has hosted the Women's Senior Amateur, in which a woman from Braemar won the tournament. Mr. Montgomery asked if this tournament is a qualifier for another tournament and Mr. Valliere replied no, this is the State Championship.

Mr. Dovolis commented that he has no reservations about doing this because every club donates their facilities for tournaments and feels this is a very positive thing that we can do for the Minnesota Golf Association as well as our own community. Mr. Fee added that this is also great publicity.

John Dovolis MOVED TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION TO HOST THE MGA WOMEN'S MID-AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP FOR 1998 UNDER JOHN VALLIERE'S DIRECTION. Jim Fee SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. EDINA HOCKEY ASSOCIATION:

A. Bantam C Team

Mr. Keprios indicated that as his staff report indicates he met with the president and vice-president of the Edina Hockey Association as well as with Julia Bertrand. However, in his staff report he noted there were 19 skaters and no goalies when actually there were 20 skaters and no goalies for the Bantam C players. Mr. Fee asked isn't that an inordinate amount to have left over in which Mr. Keprios replied he doesn't know if it's inordinate but stated he remembers when they used to have 6 in-house Bantam C teams. Mr. Fee asked isn't part of the problem not being able to get a coach because if there were enough for a third team you would then have the problem of finding a coach. Mr. Keprios replied that yes, every association does run into that issue. Mr. Keprios noted that the ideal would be to have 15 skaters and 2 goalies. Mr. Keprios indicated that last year the Edina Hockey Association hosted rainbow teams at the Bantam C level as well as the U15 girls level. Mr. Keprios stated that 3 Bantam C hockey players from Edina have volunteered to play with the St. Louis Park team.

Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that after meeting with Mr. Sitek and Mr. Reise of the Edina Hockey Association he feels that the Edina Hockey Association's philosophy and policies are still in keeping with what the Park Board has laid out. He indicated, however, that their first choice would be for all Edina kids to stay in Edina if possible. Mr. Keprios explained that rainbow teams are done with all of the hockey associations throughout the state.

Mr. Keprios explained that he was informed by a few parents that there was a closed door meeting with players, parents, Mr. Reise and Mr. Sitek of the EHA. Allegations were made that at that meeting the president made the comment that some players have to go to St. Louis Park to play or they won't have a team to play on. Mr. Keprios stated that he is hearing two sides to that story. He indicated that Mr. Sitek stated that is not what he said and if he did it was a misinterpretation. The Edina Hockey Association was looking for volunteers.

Mr. Herring asked what if there were no volunteers, what were they going to do. Mr. Keprios replied they would have to go to a plan B in which they would probably have to

find another community to attach to. Another option may be to stack up some of the B2 teams and instead of each team having 15 skaters and 2 goalies there would be 17 skaters and 2 goalies. Mr. Keprios noted that he is not going to judge if that option should have been exercised. That is the hockey association's decision, it is not the Park Board's. Mr. Keprios pointed out that it was actually St. Louis Park who came looking for kids because they didn't have enough participants to field a team. They were pleading with other communities to help them out.

Mr. Herring indicated that he doesn't understand why the hockey association was holding a try-out when they were looking for volunteers. Ms. Kohler stated that she received a call from a hockey board member who told her that another child voluntarily went from Edina's C team to St. Louis Park. This particular child stated that the reasons he volunteered were because he is a St. Thomas Academy student, he liked the coach at St. Louis Park better, it is a higher caliber of hockey, and since there are only two teams they are able to play more. She also noted that this person told her that all of the volunteers came up on their own and wanted to go, no one was counseled to leave. Mr. Fee added that he also was told the same thing, no one was forced or coerced, everyone voluntarily went on their own.

Mr. Herring indicated that he received two calls from parents who were at that meeting and when he asked them to attend tonight's Park Board meeting they declined. He noted they told him they were worried about retribution against their kids. Mr. Herring indicated that he finds this to be very disturbing and asked what do you say to somebody who says they are worried about retribution with their kid.

Mr. Herring asked what if you take the worse case scenario and kids were forced to go to a St. Louis Park team, is there anything as a Park Board that we can do about it. Mr. Keprios replied that if he was told by the hockey board that they were forcing kids to play at St. Louis Park, then yes he would take issue with that and ask for a very good explanation. However, that was not the case and the hockey association assures him no one was forced to volunteer to leave the Edina program. Mr. Herring also indicated that he was told that at this meeting it was not made clear that if they didn't have enough volunteers they would still make room so everyone can skate at Braemar. Mr. Keprios indicated that he doesn't know for sure what was said because he is hearing two different sides to the story. Mr. Keprios commented that the hockey association has said that if any of the volunteers are not happy at St. Louis Park than they are more than welcome to come back.

Mr. Crowther commented that it seems there is a communication problem between the parents and the hockey association but he doesn't see it as being a Park Board problem. He noted that if the hockey association has done a poor job of communicating than we can suggest to them to do a better job, however, we do not have any facts that say that anything has been done wrong. Mr. Fee indicated that until we see some kind of discrimination, which we haven't, this is a common problem. He noted that every year there are rainbow teams because you are always going to have some stragglers left over

and the cities try and work together to accommodate these kids. Mr. Fee added that he feels this a better option for kids to be able to go somewhere and skate on a regular basis rather than sit on the bench 90% of the time. This way they are still able to skate even though it might not be their first choice. Mr. Herring stated that the key is if the kid wants to stay in Edina and sit on the bench 90% of the time they can make that choice.

Mr. Herring asked if the Park Board can do something to ensure that there is proper communication as to what our philosophy is for those associations who are using our facilities. He noted that everyone in Edina should have the opportunity to play in Edina no matter what their skill level is. Mr. Keprios pointed out that the only group he knows of who intentionally and willfully have not abided by that rule is the girls traveling team tennis. He indicated that they hold try-outs and if you don't make it, you don't have a place to play. Mr. Keprios stated that he thinks this is an issue that is going to come up as we go down the road and have these types of discussions. In fact, there will be a whole laundry list of issues to discuss as we begin to establish guidelines and priority use of facilities. Mr. Keprios suggested to Mr. Herring that he may want to make a motion to reiterate the fact that if kids want to play here, that's their option, we need to find a way to make that happen. Mr. Herring asked isn't that already an existing policy and indicated that he would just like to make sure that it is communicated that no one is going to be forced to go, kids always have the right to play in Edina. Mr. Keprios pointed out that there is no written policy on that specific issue. Mr. Herring asked is it a Park Board philosophy and Mr. Keprios replied that it doesn't exist in writing. The only written statement of policy is a one page segment of the minutes that was adopted on November 8, 1977. It really doesn't say anywhere that all kids will have the opportunity to play in Edina if they want to. Mr. Herring commented that our mission is that all boys and girls will receive an equal opportunity to participate in any activity at whatever ability level they might play.

Mr. Montgomery asked if any other sports have this rainbow concept. Mr. MacHolda explained that in football for the upper age levels they have combined with other communities to make a league because there were not enough teams in each community to form their own leagues. Mr. MacHolda also pointed out that in traveling soccer last summer there were not enough kids at the U17 level to form their own team and Minnetonka had the same problem. Therefore, the two communities combined together to form a team. They played 50% of their games in Edina and 50% in Minnetonka.

Mr. Keprios indicated that he feels it would be premature to make a recommendation at this point because there are a lot of issues that need to be addressed before we can make recommendations.

Mr. Zachman, whose son is a Bantam C player, stated that he is still dismayed to find out that the Park Board as well as Mr. Keprios feel this is a matter of interpretation. He indicated that he was at that hockey meeting and heard the terms "dreads of Edina Hockey" and "C Hockey is Hack Hockey" which are terms that should not be used when addressing kids who are about to go on the ice. He stated that he looked around the room

and saw 7 bantam boys with tears welling up in their eyes after hearing that compassionate plea for volunteers. Mr. Zachman pointed out that his son talked to the coach immediately after the meeting and the coach told him they didn't want him to go, they wanted him to stay and play defense. He noted that his son, however, had enough personal integrity to go where he knows it's better for him. He stated that the unknown being better than the environment that was conveyed by that plea by the esteemed Jerry Sitek.

Mr. Zachman indicated that his son feels that he has been forced out of the city and he would like to know what is going to be done about it. Mr. Keprios asked Mr. Zachman if he requested that his son come back to Edina when he attended the most recent hockey board meeting in which Mr. Zachman replied no. Mr. Keprios asked Mr. Zachman what is it he would like to see done and Mr. Zachman answered he would like to see the system fixed for the future. He indicated that he has heard there is a plan to possibly have a non self-selecting board by the year 2000. Mr. Keprios asked Mr. Zachman how he wants to see the system changed and fixed since he feels his son was forced out. Mr. Zachman replied that he wants fair opportunities for the kids to play hockey at the skill level that they possess. He would like for the Park Board to supervise the hockey board so that they are providing an equal opportunity for the kids to play hockey within their community at the level appropriate for their skill.

Mr. Montgomery asked Mr. Zachman if he feels his son should have been a B or B2 player and Mr. Zachman noted that at this point he doesn't have any feel for it one way or another. He did comment, however, that his son has been in the program for five years and is yet to receive coaching. Mr. Montgomery noted that he thinks that problem exists through a lot of the programs. Mr. Montgomery asked Mr. Zachman if he would have preferred to have 23 kids on a C team and he answered he didn't think that would have been a problem. Mr. Fee noted that you can't physically get that many players into the box. Ms. Kohler indicated that one year her son had 19 skaters and that was too many because with four lines you get maybe one shift a period and that's not enough, it's not fair to anyone.

Mr. Zachman pointed out that since volunteering to go to St. Louis Park his son has taken a lot of abuse at school as well as the other kids who have "volunteered". He also indicated that if you were to ask the other parents who were at that meeting they would be more than happy to tell you their impression that when they left the locker room they also felt it was dominantly forced.

Mr. Montgomery asked Mr. Zachman how he would feel if instead the hockey association took the C players in Edina and the C players in St. Louis Park and made two teams out of them. Mr. Zachman replied that would have been preferable to the way things were handled.

Mr. Zachman indicated that part of the problem with EHA is you have to be welcomed in when you try to volunteer and that is not an easy process. Mr. Herring asked getting back

to Mr. Keprios' question, what concrete recommendations do you have to address these problems. Mr. Zachman responded that from what he understands there presently are four openings on the hockey board in which they do not wish to fill them even though they are actively soliciting applications. He noted that the board should be non self-selecting and this is something that can be addressed immediately. You need to shake up the board and have the process be an open vote but do not let it be pre-selected by the in-executive committee and then submitted to the board itself because that does not work. He indicated that the fundamentals of youth athletics are very simple, teach them to work hard, give them the fundamental skills to practice and you will end up with good players. He stated that open elections are very fundamental. Mr. Crowther asked Mr. Keprios if any of the associations have open elections in which Mr. Keprios responded no but thinks it would be a great idea. Ms. Kohler commented that one thing she really likes about the hockey board as opposed to some of the other boards is they have a 3 year limit to their term, where the other boards have no limit to their terms.

Mr. Keprios again asked Mr. Zachman what he would like the Park Board to do to further serve him and Mr. Zachman again stated he wants to see the system fixed. Mr. Keprios noted they are going to be correcting some things down the road which will address part of that issue. He also pointed out that when it comes to volunteer organizations it's not as easy as a few fundamentals. It's hard work and the boards have to make tough decisions in which he feels the hockey board has done a good job in what they think is in the best interest of the kids. Mr. Keprios also pointed out that politics are always going to exist in volunteer organizations. He also commented that for those who wish to change the system and make a contribution, those people need to get involved and get their name on the ballot.

Mr. Fee indicated that the associations are independent and not under the Park Board's control. However, if the Park Board finds them to be discriminating or doing obvious things that they should not be doing and they are using park facilities, then the Park Board can intervene.

B. Girls Hockey

Mr. Keprios indicated that girls hockey was also brought up at that same meeting with Mr. Sitek and Mr. Riese, of the Edina Hockey Association, because of the concern over some of the points Ms. Gaumer brought up at the last Park Board meeting. Ms. Gaumer's perception was that the C players were subsidizing the A and B players when it comes to the allocation of ice. Mr. Keprios noted that he was told that was definitely not the case this year and they don't believe it was the case last year. However, if it was they would be more than happy to correct it. Mr. Keprios explained that for anyone who makes an A or B team there is an automatic surcharge that they pay.

Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that he contacted the city attorney, Jerry Gilligan, to ask if an independent non-profit organization has the right to allocate indoor ice based on ability. Mr. Gilligan indicated to him that in his opinion each youth athletic association

has the legal right to discriminate by ability, however, they cannot allocate indoor ice based on gender, color, race or creed.. Mr. Keprios pointed out that years ago the traveling teams used to have all of the indoor ice and some of the C teams never saw indoor ice until the championships. Mr. Keprios commented that, based on skill level, ice is not allocated equally across the board.

Mr. Crowther asked if he understood correctly in that when a player pays a registration fee they all get the same number of hours of ice time for that basic registration fee. The so called discrimination comes in the form of the A and B upper level in that the better kids get more ice time but they also pay more for it. Mr. Keprios replied that is correct. Mr. Crowther asked Mr. Keprios if he thought what Mr. Gilligan was referring to was the ability to allow the A's and the B's to buy more time. Mr. Keprios replied that what they get they have to pay for. Mr. Fee pointed out that the C teams also have the ability to buy more ice time, however, they need to have someone to make the calls and the parents have to be willing to pay the extra money.

Mr. Keprios stated that the surcharge ice is already pre-scheduled for the A and B teams and they pay an additional \$40.00 for that. He indicated that if someone wants more ice then it is up to the team and the parents as to whether or not they want to purchase additional ice time. Mr. Herring commented that from his personal experience his son didn't want to be on the B team because he only wanted to play hockey as a recreational activity. He didn't want to have all of the obligations that go with being on a traveling team. Therefore, he feels that is a very valid reason why we can differentiate between the A, B and C programs and absolutely agrees with this.

Mr. Keprios asked Ms. Gaumer how the rest of the team feels about requesting the same additional number of hours that they are not getting. Ms. Gaumer replied that she didn't know about the whole team but did know of two other parents who were upset.

Mr. Keprios commented that with any volunteer organization it is always easy to criticize but noted that the Edina Hockey Association has had to make some tough decisions. In this case, the EHA had to decide to either appease two players on a team who want more ice time or serve the majority who prefer fewer hours and a recreational experience.

Mr. Jenkins asked Ms. Gaumer if she has been before the hockey board and she replied that she was told there is nothing they can do. Ms. Gaumer commented that she is a taxpayer and doesn't like to see her taxes spent to support programs which do not provide equal opportunities for all of the children who wish to participate in any particular sport in Edina.

Mr. Montgomery asked Ms. Gaumer to put in writing any additional comments she has because the Park Board has already heard these comments at the previous Park Board meeting as well as this months meeting. Mr. Montgomery stated that he feels the C program has been scheduled adequate ice time.

IV. GUIDELINES FOR PRIORITY USE OF EDINA'S PUBLIC FACILITIES

Mr. Keprios explained to the Park Board that a lot of communities are currently going through a similar exercise. He indicated that Eden Prairie just finished writing their guidelines and therefore he is using their draft as a starting point to establish guidelines that best suit Edina. Not everything that is in the Eden Prairie policy applies to Edina. Mr. Keprios noted that we need to look at and get a feel for what is best for Edina. He explained that this will take a lot of soul searching and it is not something that will be accomplished in a month or two. He noted that it is going to take some involvement as well as input from the athletic associations. It was noted that Mr. Herring, Mr. Fee and Mr. Montgomery are willing to volunteer to work on this task force. He stated there needs to be formal written rules and policies for everyone to follow.

Ms. Kohler indicated that she feels it would be helpful if the Park Board could review the mission of each organization because that would make it a lot easier. Mr. Keprios stated that he will get the missions and bylaws together and meet with Mr. Herring, Mr. Fee and Mr. Montgomery and will report back on this topic in February.

V. OTHER

A. Walnut Ridge Park - Mr. Keprios handed out to the Park Board copies of two different letters that Mr. Arnold would like to have be part of the public record. Mr. Arnold states that he is concerned about the ice time schedule. Mr. Keprios indicated that they need to build a decent base at Walnut Ridge Park even if it means building ice during the holidays when school is out. Mr. Keprios stated that regardless of what he may have promised or tried to attempt to accomplish the Park Maintenance Department needs to do what is in the best interest of the community. However, once there is a decent base they do not need to maintain the ice before 7:00 a.m. Mr. Keprios commented that they are there to serve the public as a whole and not just one family.

B. Senior Center - Ms. Rydell asked what the status is with the Senior Center and Mr. Keprios replied that nothing has changed from the last meeting. He explained that he has been directed to research all community centers in the Twin Cities area and how these communities serve their senior population.

C. Shelter Buildings - Mr. Keprios indicated that they will be opening bids for the shelter buildings on January 28th. He explained that, if the bids come in too high, Weber will be the one that will get pulled out of the bid process. Mr. Montgomery noted that he thought a commitment was made to build a shelter building at Weber Park. Mr. Keprios stated that Mr. Rosland has directed him to pull Weber Park if the bids come in too high. He noted that would be in the best interest of the community and he supports Mr. Rosland's decision.

Mr. Keprios stated that the comfort stations are still on schedule and those include Garden Park, Lake Cornelia Park and Wooddale Park.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Dave Crowther MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:50 P.M. John Dovolis
SECONDED THE MOTION. MEETING ADJOURNED.