

EDINA PARK BOARD  
7:30 P.M.  
MANAGER'S CONFERENCE ROOM  
NOVEMBER 10, 1998

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MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Jenkins, Beth Hall, Andrew Montgomery, Andy Herring, Tom White, Jean Rydell, Dave Crowther, Dave Fredlund, Phyllis Kohler

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Dovolis, Becky Bennett

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Marjorie Ruedy, Jill Hartman, Katie Meehan, Vicki Berg, Debbi Swanstrom, Eva Johnson, Wendy Houle, Andy Halper, Randy Swanstrom, Steve Fatsis, Connie Brimacombe

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**I. APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 13, 1998 PARK BOARD MINUTES**

Jean Rydell MOVED TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 13, 1998 PARK BOARD MINUTES. Bill Jenkins SECONDED THE MOTION. MINUTES APPROVED.

**II. OFF-LEASH AREAS FOR DOGS**

Mr. Keprios explained that the neighbors from the Todd Park area put together a request asking for the Park Board and staff to look at the possibility of having an off-leash area for dogs. They are not necessarily asking for the entire park at all times to be an off-leash area but to look at the possibility of a certain area at certain times. He noted that Edina currently does not have any off-leash areas.

Mr. Keprios stated that staff has gathered information from surrounding communities and included that in the Park Board's packet for review. He indicated that there are some off-leash sites currently in Hennepin County Parks and Ramsey County parks. Also, Bloomington is currently looking into this possibility. Mr. Keprios indicated that some things he has learned from the research is the areas that do have off-leash sites for dogs are primarily open areas that are not heavily wooded which allow dogs to run free without losing the visual site by the dog owner. These areas are secured by natural or fenced in boundaries and do not interfere with existing park users. Also, these areas require adequate parking, access to drinking water for both pets and owners, rest room facilities for the dog owners as well as trash receptacles to dispose of the dog feces. Lastly, there also needs to be some type of trail system to walk a dog on a leash that leads to the off-leash area. In addition, these areas consist of several acres.

Mr. Keprios indicated that it is the staff's perspective that within the Edina Park system there really is not a good site, however, staff is open to ideas. One area that staff did talk about as a possibility is Braemar where the gun range facility was located.

Mr. Keprios pointed out that it's going to be a tough sell to be able to create an off-leash site at an existing park. He commented that is not to say that they aren't open to new ideas and trying new things and this Park Board meeting is part of the process.

Katie Meehan, resident, thanked everyone on behalf of the Todd Park Neighborhood for the City doing such a great job on the park renovation projects. It really turned out nice and everyone is pleased with it.

She then explained that earlier this week the neighborhood got together and came to the conclusion that what they are looking for right now is an opportunity to enter into thoughtful discussion and exploration of the possibility of an experimental off-leash pilot program in Todd Park. Ms. Meehan stated that they would like to see a task force created where a few representatives from the neighborhood could work closely with a few representatives from the Park Board to really explore this issue. She also pointed out that they feel winter would be a good time to do an experimental program and therefore timing right now is very crucial. She explained the reason they feels this would be a good time is because seniors use the path quite a bit and they do not want to interfere or upset them in any way. Therefore, if there were specific times such as 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m, they will not be running into a youth issue with the children in the play area or the seniors on the path. Ms. Meehan stated that this is an example of a win, win situation because people will be out with their dogs at night and can watch for any vandalism issues that may happen. She stated that all of the neighbors care about each other and watch out for one another which is a really positive thing.

John Carlson, Animal Control Officer, indicated that he has had a lot of people ask him if there are any off-leash sites in Edina. He stated that one of the biggest concerns Animal Control has is the enforcement of the laws, such as cleaning up after the dogs and making sure the dogs are under control. Right now, dogs must be on a leash no greater than 10 feet, however, in the past four to six weeks there have been an increase of calls that dogs are running loose and people are not cleaning up after their dogs. Mr. Carlson noted that he is not saying that Todd Park is any worse than any other park in Edina. He stressed that cleaning up after pets is the number one complaint Animal Control receives, especially at the beginning of any sporting season when kids are running through the different athletic fields. Mr. Carlson pointed out that if he sees someone playing catch with their dog and they have control of the animal he generally won't tag. The majority of complaints are people cleaning up after their dogs.

Mr. Carlson informed the Park Board that in talking to other cities the biggest concerns seem to be people who are not cleaning up after their dogs and having a big enough park that has fencing of some kind. He stated that he would have a concern with Braemar

becoming an off-leash area because of all of the wild life that is there. Mr. Carlson pointed out that if you use an area like Todd Park you need to think about fencing and then how many dogs can be there at one time before it gets overpopulated. He also noted that as far as the general public on the walking paths not everyone is comfortable with dogs whether they are small dogs or large dogs.

Jill Hartman, resident, stated that in terms of cleaning up, they not only clean up after their own dogs but clean up after other people's dogs because everyone loves the park and cares about it. She noted that there is, however, only one garbage can currently at the park and there really needs to be more. She also stated that she doesn't necessarily feel that the clean up issue should be tied to the off-leash issue. Ms. Hartman indicated that if they were able to have an off-leash area at certain times there would definitely need to be signs posted so that people who are uncomfortable around dogs would know when dogs would be running around. She commented that the neighborhood would also be insistent on the enforcement of people cleaning up after their dogs as well as making sure their dogs are under control and that there are no mean and vicious dogs running around. Ms. Hartman informed the Park Board that they are not looking for a place in Edina for an off-leash area, they are looking for Todd Park and they would take a lot of responsibility for what goes on there.

Ms Meehan stated that if word got out that Todd Park is an off-leash park, dogs from all over the city would be there and they don't want that either. They thought possibly the park could be tagged as being an experimental pilot program and ask people to cooperate with them. Perhaps only so many blocks within the circumference of the park may participate in the program. Then, if it works, it could be done in other areas of the city. She commented that another idea is possibly people would register their dogs in order to be able to participate and then that money could be used to buy a baggie dispenser, etc. Ms. Meehan noted that if they are granted this opportunity they stand to lose if the calls increase on complaining about dog feces in the park. In other words the neighborhood would become an asset to the park because the park is an asset to the neighborhood.

Andy Halper, resident, indicated that when the neighborhood met earlier this week they really didn't understand the totalities of why these statutes are in place. They understand one reason is because they don't want people to be injured, however, they don't understand all of the ramifications as to why the statute is in place. Therefore, if a task force could be made there might be a better understanding of why the statute is the way it is as well as an understanding of how the system works and possibly engage in some very positive changes.

A resident stated that before the park building went up and a path was put in there were a lot of discussions and meetings and there was a lot of compromise that took place and not everyone was happy with every decision. However, this is a community that works well together and have compromised with one another and this is something that could be done again. The resident pointed out that they are not looking for a leash-free area every day, all day. They are looking for something that would be relatively fair to everyone.

Mr. Crowther informed the residents that the laws are not passed by the Park Board but are passed by the City Council. The Park Board can only make a recommendation to the City Council. He stated that Todd Park does not just belong to the people who live in the neighborhood but it belongs to anyone who wants to use the park. He indicated that pinpointing an isolated park for a group of people isn't going to work very well because you cannot control who uses the park, they are for everyone.

Mr. Halper stated that he agrees 100% with Mr. Crowther, however, if they were to start with the view that this is a pilot project and Todd Park is being chosen because it's manageable. A pilot program needs to begin at one place.

Mr. Keprios explained how the statue got to where it is today. He indicated that all of the parks in Edina used to be off-leash as long as the dog was within voice command of the owner, which was very difficult to enforce. He noted that at that time there were a lot of residents who were on the other side of this issue and did not like that ordinance. They felt that the parks are for people and if they want to walk their dogs they have to be on a leash. Mr. Keprios stated that maybe there is some middle ground and we can experiment. He pointed that the neighbors of Todd Park have indicated that they do not want a parking lot and if the ordinance is changed people from all over will be coming to Todd Park with their dogs. Mr. Keprios again stated that this is a tough sell because he has already been through this issue with the neighborhood. He then stated that the best thing they have going right now is the way in which the enforcement team enforces the laws.

A resident asked when this last statute was passed in which Mr. Keprios replied that it was less than 10 years ago. Mr. Fredlund asked if anyone present has been ticketed for having a dog loose in which a few replied that they had received a warning. Mr. Carlson stated that again it depends on the officer because it varies from officer to officer on what they give tickets for. Some officers go strictly by the book where others are more lenient if their dog is under control.

Mr. Montgomery asked how many Park Board members have dogs because he feels it becomes a polarized issue because those who have dogs are for these people. He noted that he is for anything that gives the dog a little more freedom.

Mr. Herring stated that when he goes running in the morning and sees a dog not on a leash it is a situation that he doesn't like. He feels there is a good reason for these laws.

Mr. Crowther indicated that he has reviewed all of the information and believes that if you eliminate the leash requirement you will get the individuals who will want to train their dogs for hunting and these people will be able to use starter pistols if they are properly registered. Therefore, he has a concern about putting a facility in an existing park but if there is other land that would be suitable he doesn't have a problem with it.

He does, however, have a problem putting it in an existing park for control reasons and for cleanliness, especially where there are children playing.

Ms. Kohler indicated that she is struggling with the lack of data from the complaints. She asked how many complaints do we get per park and is Todd Park an average park. She stated that she is not comfortable making a decision without more data. Mr. Carlson replied that unless someone leaves their name, address and files an official complaint, there are no records kept. Therefore, it would be tough to get specific numbers for exactly how many complaints are made. He can, however, look up how many citations are issued but they do not have a tracking system for written warnings.

Mr. Keprios stated that he receives very few complaints about dogs running loose. However, he does receive a number of complaints on people not cleaning up after their dogs.

Mr. Crowther asked if there is an interest in pursuing a task force because he doesn't sense there is an overwhelming interest to try and change the ordinance. Mr. Montgomery commented that he would be interested in serving on a task force.

Mr. Fredlund stated that he thinks it's real problematic if an off-leash area is put in any of the neighborhood parks. However, if there is an area like Braemar he would be open to forming a task force to look into that possibility.

Mr. Herring indicated that if Mr. Montgomery would like to work with this group of people from the Todd Park neighborhood and come up with a proposal that makes sense and the staff is behind it than he would be willing to consider it. Mr. Jenkins noted that he concurs with Mr. Herring.

It was noted that a task force will be made up of Mr. Montgomery and Mr. White from the Park Board as well as Andy Halper and Debbie Swanstrom from the neighborhood.

### **III. YOUTH ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION BUDGETS**

Mr. Keprios indicated that the Youth Athletic Association Budget is something that Ms. Bennett brought up at the last Park Board meeting and has asked if we would be willing to delay discussion until next month's meeting. Everyone agreed to wait until next month's meeting to discuss the issue.

### **IV. OTHER**

**A. Partnership With Schools and Athletic Associations** - Ms. Kohler indicated that since she has been on the Park Board she has been somewhat disappointed because the Park Board has been dealing primarily with facilities and budgets. She realizes that these are very important issues, however, her passion remains children. She indicated that she was hoping the Park Board could come up with some sort of partnership between the

schools and the athletic associations. Ms. Kohler stated that the Park Board does not have any mission with regards to children. Mr. Crowther asked her if she would put something in writing regarding this issue for the next Park Board meeting. Ms. Kohler noted that she will because she feels more money needs to be spent on providing services to the kids.

**B. Aquatennial Swim Meet** - Mr. Herring asked about the Aquatennial Swim Meet. He indicated that he noticed the Swim Club made approximately \$9,000 at the swim meet at the U of M this past year. Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that the Edina Swim Club had a very good turnout and it was a very successful swim meet. The U of M is a wonderful facility.

Mr. Keprios explained that he contacted the manager at the U of M Aquatic Center and put Edina's name in for any 1999 date that is available. However, the only two dates available were the Fourth of July and a weekend in April, both of which would not work for the Edina Swim Club. He stated that if there was a date available that did work they would likely be using the U of M in 1999.

Mr. Keprios explained that staff had hoped that the Edina Swim Club could hold their meet at the start of the season at the Edina Aquatic Center, however, there is a conflict with other swim meets occurring at the time. Therefore, staff has decided to try a joint use for 1999 during the second weekend in July. The wading pool will be open as well as the concession stand, which will be run with the Aquatic Center staff. The Edina Swim Club will only have access through the back gate and they will have to do all of their computer work out of a trailer, as well as, bus in their people from an off-site facility. Therefore, the Aquatic Center will be open for business with the exception of the large pool the second weekend in July. Mr. Keprios also noted that the Edina Swim Club will be charged more than they have in the past. He indicated that the Edina Swim Club is okay with this.

Mr. Herring asked if the University of Minnesota has the Edina Swim Club's name for the following summer. Mr. Keprios replied absolutely and after seeing how this event works this summer the issue will be re-addressed again. Mr. Herring asked do you really think it's worth it to try to keep this portion of the pool open. Mr. Keprios stated that it's hard to judge without trying it.

## **V. KUNZ/LEWIS PROPERTY FACILITIES REPORT**

Mr. Keprios showed the Park Board the presentation which he previously presented to the City Council. He noted that the City Council has not taken any formal action to proceed with any specific plan as of yet. He indicated that after his presentation Frank Bennett gave a presentation regarding a possible WMEP school for that same site. He indicated that at this time they are really in limbo. He commented that he just wanted to bring the Park Board up to speed on where everything is at.

Mr. Crowther asked is there clearly a need for a competition pool in which Mr. Keprios responded there is a need. He indicated that the school has flat out told us that the school does not need a 50 meter pool because all of their competitions are in 25 meter pools. It was also noted that the schools do not need gymnasiums, however, the new facilities would enhance their existing school district programs. Mr. Crowther asked how many people use a 50 meter facility in which Mr. Keprios responded that it is very few and also pointed out that there is not one 50 meter pool in the country that he is aware of that makes money. They are very expensive to operate.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Andy Montgomery MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:10 P.M. Bill Jenkins SECONDED THE MOTION. MEETING ADJOURNED.