

EDINA PARK BOARD
7:00 P.M.
EDINA COUNCIL CHAMBERS
SEPTEMBER 11, 2002

MEMBERS PRESENT: Andy Finsness, Mike Damman, Allyson Grande, Karla Sitek, Tom White, Ardis Wexler, George Klus, Jeff Johnson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Floyd Grabiell, Linda Presthus, David Fredlund

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Ed MacHolda, Janet Canton, Tom Shirley, Ann Kattreh

OTHERS PRESENT: Phyllis Strong, Joan McCarthy, Reynee Barta, Diane Kulbeck

I. APPROVAL OF THE TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2002 PARK BOARD MINUTES

George Klus MOVED TO APPROVE THE JUNE 11, 2002 PARK BOARD MINUTES. Ardis Wexler SECONDED THE MOTION. MINUTES APPROVED.

II. EDINBOROUGH PARK PLAYGROUND AND PARK USER FEE PROPOSAL – TOM SHIRLEY

Tom Shirley, Manager of Edinborough and Centennial Lakes, explained that ever since Edinborough Park opened in 1987 they have charged a fee for the pool, track and ice rink. What they are proposing now is that there also be a charge for the use of the lower level amenities that previously were free. Those would include the tot lot, great hall and grotto areas. He noted they would like to charge two separate fees, one for the track/pool and the other a general park fee. They would also like to have a resident and non-resident rate. Currently they are proposing to charge \$2.50 for residents and \$3.50 for non-residents for the general park areas.

Mr. Shirley pointed out that the main reason they are proposing a fee is because the park is losing money and they need revenue. This past year was their best ever and yet they still were just under a \$100,000 loss. He noted that unfortunately it's only going to get worse because all of their revenue sources are tapped out and all of the development is completely finished. Mr. Shirley stated that in addition they are also going to start having a lot of new maintenance bills as the building ages. Mr. Shirley indicated that they would also like to have some money to fund new programs in the Great Hall. Also, if a fee is charged, they will have a better control mechanism because they cannot always

accommodate the large number of people that show up. He noted that when they are extremely crowded it becomes a safety issue.

Mr. Shirley stated that their survey found that 70% of the users of Edinborough Park are non-residents. Unfortunately, they are ultimately losing money that will come back to the taxpayers. Currently they are not receiving any tax revenues, however, if things continue as they are in approximately 15 years that will definitely change. Therefore, they are trying to head that off as much as they can.

Mr. Shirley indicated that they are also looking at putting in a new tot lot, which would help make the fees a little more tolerable to everyone. He pointed out that in 1987 the tot lot was built and it does not meet current safety standards for new equipment. He noted that when the main slide broke they had to remove it and were not able to replace it because of the new safety standards. Mr. Shirley commented that the existing play equipment and location is undersized and it is scheduled to be replaced next year and noted that a new soft sided play structure in that same area would cost approximately \$90,000 and would still be undersized. He explained that staff is proposing to take out the ice rink and put in a new playground structure in that space which would be a lot larger and nicer structure and would only cost approximately \$56,000. He stated that with the current safety zones standards, about three spring animals would be the only traditional play structure items that could go in the current location and that is why they started looking at using the ice rink area as the new play structure area.

Mr. Shirley pointed out that currently the ice rink is losing money and added that in the next few years it will need a new Zamboni and chiller system, which are very expensive items. Therefore, they needed to take a hard look at that area because it doesn't make sense to spend \$130,000 to \$140,000 on an undersized ice rink when it's losing money.

Mr. Shirley indicated that they feel this is a win, win situation for the most part because they will actually receive revenues and be able to provide more programs and make it an even better park.

Mr. Keprios noted that he included in the Park Board packet a newspaper clipping regarding Town Square Park in St. Paul. He noted that Town Square Park is an indoor park that was originally developed to operate under somewhat the same financial model as Edinborough Park. However, after years of operating at a deficit, St. Paul finally decided to sell the park property. The Edinborough/Centennial Lakes Park model relies on revenues from program and rental fees & charges, monthly fees from businesses and residents, and interest earnings from a trust fund to pay for all of the operating expenses. Unfortunately, the expenses exceed revenues each year and the deficit is being paid by the trust fund principle, which in turn earns even less interest the following year. Without corrective action, this cycle will spiral downward to where the trust fund is going to run out all together and the deficit expense will fall on the shoulders of the general taxpayer of Edina. Mr. Shirley added that at one point it was estimated the trust fund would be 9 million dollars and the highest it ever got was 5.2 million. However, because of some of the developments did not become as large as was initially planned,

the trust fund keeps going down and at the present rate it will hit zero in approximately 14 years and they are trying to keep that from happening.

Mr. Keprios explained that the proposal is not a dislike for the ice rink but rather we need to come up with some creative ideas to reduce expenses and collect revenues, especially in light of the fact that 70% of the users are non-residents. He noted that he feels Mr. Shirley and Ms. Kattreh have come up with a great solution. Mr. Keprios stated that he does not want to see us end up like Town Square Park in St. Paul.

Ms. Wexler asked if the people who are coming in for concerts and entertainment be charged a fee. Mr. Shirley replied that the concerts would still be free because the whole upper level would need to be kept open for people to be able to go from the hotel to the deli. He explained that they would probably try to use that as a marketing tool, especially the children's programs because once they have attended a free concert they will see what else Edinborough has to offer.

Mr. Klus asked what would be left in the park that would be free to which Mr. Shirley replied that the whole upper level where you can walk around as well as the amphitheatre where the concerts are held.

Ms. Wexler asked if there is an estimate on what it would cost in labor to maintain a ticket booth. Mr. Shirley responded that currently they have the front desk that people need to walk past, although it's not the greatest situation. He explained that they are thinking there would be one wristband for both the pool/track and another wristband for the general park area. He noted that they do have maintenance people controlling the park who keep an eye on everything.

Mr. Klus indicated that a lot of these play areas have been put in shopping centers and have not done too well and asked Mr. Shirley how well he thinks this would do at Edinborough. Mr. Shirley replied that the majority of the play areas in the shopping centers have been very small, at Edinborough it would be more of an outdoor play structure that just happens to be indoors. He also noted that their prices would not be as high as the places Mr. Klus is referring to. Mr. Shirley indicated that he thinks it would probably be quite successful and if it doesn't work they are still ahead of the game because right now people are getting in for free. He also pointed out that from the survey that was conducted approximately 70% of the people said they would pay a nominal fee to use the park. Ms. Kattreh commented that the number one thing that people said in the survey was that they wanted a larger play structure and would be willing to pay to use it. Mr. Klus noted that he thinks if people go to an outdoor park it's free and feels just because it is indoors it should still be free. Mr. Shirley replied that as a stand alone play structure he's not sure people will pay and that is why they want to be able to offer other activities in the Great Hall.

Mr. White asked how the arrangement would work with the hotel guests to which Mr. Shirley explained the hotel would have to pay a higher rate than what they are currently paying and added that they will be working with the hotel management.

Mr. White asked about the pre-school that's located in Edinborough and asked if they receive free passes to the park. Mr. Shirley replied that they would have to work something out with them. He noted that currently they are not allowed to use the tot lot at certain times during the day because they don't have enough space.

Mr. White asked if families would be able to purchase a membership instead of paying individually each time to which Mr. Shirley replied definitely. He also added that they are looking at having a maximum of \$10.00 per family per day so that it doesn't become overwhelming.

Mr. White indicated that he has gone to the Great Hall many times and noted that it is no fun when you go and it is being set up for a wedding. He asked how the wedding situations would be handled. Mr. Shirley responded that they are thinking about pulling back on their wedding business in the winter when people really want to use the indoor park. He noted that currently there are not a lot of events planned for Friday nights. However, for Saturdays they would maybe need to close the Great Hall at 2:00 p.m. and then re-open on Sunday mornings. Mr. White commented that he thought we make a lot of money on wedding rentals to which Mr. Shirley replied that is correct but currently they are only renting 50% of the Friday evenings at Edinborough and most of those are in the spring and summer. He added that when they put the numbers together if they had certain hours from November through April it wouldn't have too much of an effect. He noted that they would have approximately an \$8,000 charge they would have to offset which he thinks they can do with admissions on Friday nights.

Mr. White asked if the play structure moves to where the ice rink is what would happen to the space that is currently the play area. Mr. Shirley explained that they are still debating that. One idea is to turn it into a picnic area that could be rented out for birthday parties, etc. However, the only problem with that is once they take out the swings they cannot put them back in because of code and right now they are grandfathered in. Therefore, they are also looking at keeping the area as a tot lot for the smaller children because of the bucket swings.

Phyllis Strong, resident of Centennial Lakes Village Homes, noted that as residents they have free use of the pool and track and asked if they would have to pay a nominal fee if this all comes about. Mr. Shirley explained that there would not be a nominal fee added on to the pool and track. There would only be a fee for the play structure and Great Hall. He also commented that there may be a small charge for people who are coming in to baby-sit grandchildren, etc.

Mr. Klus indicated that he feels there are still a lot of conceptual things that need to be put together and he's not so sure that they can vote on this tonight. Ms. Wexler asked if they are looking for a vote to go ahead and redevelop it further at this point. Mr. White noted that he would like to see a more concrete plan or idea before it goes on to the City Council. However, maybe you want to get the Park Board's input and then put together your plan so that you don't spend all of your time doing something just for us to tell you

we never wanted you to do that in the first place. Mr. White noted that he would also like to hear some other ideas and asked if they have thought about a theme play structure because people may be more apt to use that than just a regular play structure. Mr. Shirley replied that they have looked at several different plans regarding theme parks. However, the one they are looking at seriously would cost approximately \$56,000 whereas the theme structures cost three to four times that much.

Ms. Wexler asked if it is reasonable that the Park Board vote to support the concept at this point. Mr. Shirley responded that the big issue is the concept of charging a fee and if the support is there then they can develop a plan with more specifics. He noted that they would probably be making changes until the last minute, however, the main one would be that the ice rink would probably go next summer. Mr. Klus asked how much additional revenue they are hoping to raise by doing this to which Mr. Shirley replied approximately \$112,000.

Mr. Finsness commented that he can sympathize with the loss in revenue but what we have at Edinborough Park with it being part of the park system at no charge is a great thing and he would hate to lose that.

Mr. White commented that he thinks the idea of the ice rink is great conceptually but noted that it is so small he feels it's almost worthless. It was noted that there are three indoor ice rinks at Braemar Ice Arena.

Mr. White asked if anyone would like to make a motion that would provide preliminary approval and then come back with a final plan. Mr. Keprios explained that what he is looking for is approval in concept to basically turn Edinborough Park into a for fee facility for the areas that they are recommending and convert the skating rink into a play area. Mr. Keprios stated that he feels the most important thing is to see if the Park Board is in agreement because the concept is going to change the character of the park.

Mr. White commented that if they are going to have to spend \$130,000 to fix the ice rink and Zamboni and it would only cost \$56,000 to put in a new play structure, why don't they just do that and save \$60,000. They can decide later on if they want to do it for a fee. Ms. Kattreh commented that her one main concern is that it would draw in a lot more people which in turn will end up costing them more money because it will require more upkeep and maintenance for the park in general. Mr. Keprios added that if they are able to charge a fee it will also allow them better control of how many people they let into the park. Most importantly, however, is it gets it off the shoulders of the taxpayer in the long run. They need to make sure that the future of the park is going to be able to stay financially secure. Mr. Klus noted that he questions whether we are just putting on a band-aid by doing this now and it will just be something we will have to deal with a few years down the road. He stated that he can't see financially how it's going to work long range and therefore it's hard for him to support it. Mr. Klus indicated that he doesn't have a problem with getting rid of the ice rink; he just wants to make sure that fiscally we are doing the right thing for the future. Mr. Keprios commented that they are not

proposing this is a fix all for the future of the Edinborough Park. There are a lot of steps they will need to take to try to break even.

Mr. Johnson suggested incorporating something into the pool at Edinborough. Mr. Shirley indicated that they have proposed getting an architect to take a look at the whole facility and try to come up with some different ideas that have not yet been explored.

Mr. White asked so is it your plan after you see us to go to the council or is it your plan to come back with a proposal, get our approval and then go before the City Council. Mr. Keprios indicated that he would like to talk to Mr. Hughes to see if he feels this is the appropriate time to ask for the City Council's blessing in concept to move forward. If the answer is no, then there is no sense in coming up with a concrete plan. This needs to start with the Park Board to see if you are in favor of the concept. Mr. Keprios added that this is not a fix all but it certainly is a big step in the right direction.

Ardis Wexler MOVED THAT WE VOTE IN FAVOR OF THE CONCEPT OF CHANGING EDINBOROUGH PARK INTO A FEE PRODUCING AREA AND WOULD ASK TO HAVE A MORE FLUSHED OUT PROPOSAL PERHAPS AT THE NEXT PARK BOARD MEETING OR MEETING AFTER. Karla Sitek SECONDED THE MOTION.

Mr. White noted that the idea behind the motion is approve the idea of a user fee but come back with a more concrete proposal.

In Favor – Ardis Wexler, Karla Sitek, Tom White, Jeff Johnson, Mike Damman, Allyson Grande

Against – Andy Finsness, George Klus

MOTION CARRIED.

III. APPOINTMENT TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

Mr. White stated that Ms. Presthus has informed him that she would be willing to serve on this board another year.

Tom White MOVED TO NOMINATE THAT LINDA PRESTHUS SERVE ON THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD. Karla Sitek SECONDED THE MOTION.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

IV. PRESENTATION BY ED MACHOLDA, PARK AND RECREATION ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Ed MacHolda showed a Power Point presentation for the Park Board outlining his duties and areas of responsibilities in his position as Assistant Director for the Park and Recreation Department. After the presentation, Mr. Keprios commended Mr. MacHolda for doing an outstanding job with the Edina Aquatic Center, as well as, his other numerous duties.

V. UPDATES

A. Edina Aquatic Center Improvements – Mr. White asked if the Aquatic Center could put in an Icee machine to which Mr. MacHolda replied they are looking into getting some type of an Icee, smoothie, or soft serve machine. He noted that he thinks it would be a major hit.

Mr. MacHolda indicated that they are working very hard to get the general contractor to complete the work at the Edina Aquatic Center. He stated that he thinks they were very good in getting the key things done before their June 7th opening. However, there are still a lot of things missing as well as items that need fixing. Most of these items did not affect the operation during the season but he would really like to see them get completed.

Mr. Keprios pointed out that when Mr. MacHolda first started working for the City of Edina in 1985 the revenues at the pool were approximately \$45,000 and it was losing money. Mr. MacHolda has since then turned it into a large revenue producer. He stated that it's a beautiful and well-designed facility and attributes that to Mr. MacHolda. Mr. Keprios also noted that Mr. MacHolda has spent a lot of nights and weekends away from his family because he insists on perfection at the facility. He commented that he is very proud of the job that Mr. MacHolda has done.

Mr. White indicated that Mr. MacHolda has done a really good job and asked what his next project is at the pool. Mr. MacHolda replied that he would love to have water cannons along the west edge of the main pool. He noted that eventually he would like to convert the pool from an L shape to a U shape with a step entry at the far end with two feet of water. He indicated that he would also like to have spectator seating by the plunge pool. Mr. MacHolda also commented that he will be having a three-person tube for the flume ride, which seems to be a lot more popular and will move people through the line a lot quicker.

Ms. Wexler asked if there would be some kind of over hang over the seating to which Mr. MacHolda yes, you can never have too much shade. He noted that he would love to have umbrellas all the way around the wading pool and would also like to have a trellis on at least one side of the main pool deck.

B. Fox Meadow Park Development Project – Mr. Keprios indicated there have been some very generous individuals in the Fox Meadow neighborhood. They have raised

\$40,700 and with \$100,000 from the Developer's Fund that has been approved they now have \$140,700 budgeted to get the job done. He noted that the architect is currently working on this to try to get some specifications together.

C. Lewis Park - Mr. Klus asked Mr. Keprios for the status of Lewis Park. Mr. Keprios replied that it's still in a fragile state but it is their hope that they will start to sod the outlying areas by the end of next week. He added that even with all of the rain they have received, the area has amazingly stayed dry.

D. Skate Park - Mr. Keprios indicated that they are scheduled to give another presentation to the Best Buy Corporation in October. They were told that a decision should be made by the end of October but they are definitely still in the running.

E. Off-Leash Dog Park – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that he met with the Park Director from the Minneapolis Park Board and her assistant and learned that their Public Works Department wants to put up 30 ft. high water holding tanks on that property. Therefore, they don't want to release it and allow the Minneapolis Park Board to use it as an off-leash dog park. Mr. Keprios commented that he hasn't given up on it yet. He noted that Edina's Engineering Department is going to find out if this really is a realistic plan and if so are they going to politically be able to do it.

Mr. Klus asked how many dog parks there are in Minneapolis to which Mr. Keprios replied he believes there are currently three or four sites and added that they are very, very popular.

F. Disc Golf Course - Mr. Keprios indicated that the disc golf course baskets have arrived and the Eagle Scout candidate, Paul Buck, and his recruits will start to put them into the ground on October 5th. The course should be playable by the end of the day on October 5th. Mr. White asked if they would have a grand opening with the professional disc golfer. Mr. Keprios replied that we would definitely do something.

G. Teen Night – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that they just held their first teen night at the Aquatic Center on August 23rd. He noted that it was sponsored by Edina Alarm (John Barnett's company) who donated \$500.00 to the event as part of the Connecting With Kids initiative. Mr. MacHolda commented that it was a lot of fun and noted that there were approximately 250 to 300 kids who showed up throughout the evening. Mr. MacHolda indicated that Mr. Keprios, Ms. Tilsner, Ms. Miller, Susie MacHolda (Ed's wife) and Melanie Pusateri all volunteered their help with the event. He noted that there were three garage bands that provided live music entertainment and we served pizza and ice cream. He also noted that the main pool was open with the cable ride, water slide and diving board. It was overall a very positive experience.

VI. OTHER

A. Edina Theatre Company – Mr. Keprios indicated that the Edina Theatre Company is forming and noted that he met with them a few nights ago to help them start to get

organized. He stated that they want to run their productions in the Grange Hall with their first production being held in November. Mr. Keprios commented that they could seat approximately 80 people in there. He explained that they will be putting on a three-actor play and it will be more of a theatre in the round type of setting. He noted that it's great to have a community theatre back in Edina. He stated that they would be hearing more about this.

B. Fees and Charges – Mr. Keprios indicated that the fees and charges would be sent out in the next Park Board packet for preliminary review. He will be asking for their recommendations to the City Council at the November Park Board meeting.

C. Art Center - Mr. Klus commented to Mr. Keprios that he was over the Art Center recently and noted that they have done a phenomenal job of cleaning up around the walkways and the back yard area by the kilns. He noted that the neighbors are very pleased.

D. Vandalism – Mr. Johnson asked what the status has been with any vandalism. Mr. Keprios replied that recently they have had some vandalism at Centennial Lakes. Also, they have recently had some vandalism at the Cornelia School shelter building. There was another episode of vandalism at Arden Park and fortunately the police caught the kids that did the vandalism.

E. Iron Kids Triathlon - Mr. Keprios indicated that they recently hosted the Iron-Kids Triathlon at the Aquatic Center and it was very successful. He added that Mr. MacHolda again donated another one of his days. Mr. MacHolda pointed out that their numbers were way up with over 200 participants, which is the largest increase at any of their sites from one year to the next.

F. Braemar Police and Fire Facility – Mr. White asked what the status is with the Braemar Police and Fire facility. He also asked what has happened to the stated promise that the public will be able to get in and use it. Mr. Keprios responded that he would find out the answers to those questions and report back at the next Park Board meeting.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

George Klus MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:15 P.M. Mike Damman SECONDED THE MOTION. MEETING ADJOURNED.