



**City of Newport  
Park Board Meeting  
March 24, 2016**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

**2. ROLL CALL**

Board Members present – Emily White; Anita Perkins; Heidi Tweeten, Paul Hansen;

Board Members absent – John Graber

Also present –Matt Yokiell, Executive Director; Dan Lund, Councilman Liaison

**Chairperson White** – I think we're expecting John any minute. Welcome Paul Hansen, a new member and John Graber and when he comes I'll acknowledge that as well.

**3. APPROVAL OF PARK BOARD MINUTES**

**A. Park Board Minutes of February 25, 2016 Regular Meeting**

**Motion by Perkins, seconded by Tweeten, to approve the February 25, 2016 minutes. With 4 Ayes, 0 Nays, the motion carried.**

**4. PAULINE SCHOTTMULLER, RESIDENT**

**Pauline Schottmuller, 97 10<sup>th</sup> Street** – I appreciate you giving me some time here. Recently there's been some talk at the Council and the Parks Board here that got me thinking about things. First I am going to give you some of my background so you understand where I'm coming from. I have a 4 year degree from the U of M in Parks and Recreation Administration and worked for a while in that field before changing. In terms of my work experience in Parks and Recreation I worked at the Charles Matthews Recreation Center in Minneapolis. Working my way through college I worked in the summer recreation program that at that time back in the 70s was run by District 833 but I ran the Newport Summer Recreation Program. We also had a Newport Team Club that was here in this building. It was run by volunteers and I was the one paid employee for the Newport Teen Center. I also used to ref for pay, adult recreational softball leagues. Volunteer work experience, I think for about 12 years I was a member of the NAA both as Equipment Manager and as Vice President and also refereeing. I can tell you that refereeing kids' games is a lot worse than refereeing adult games. I belong to Newport-on-the-Move, I was 6 years on the Washington County Library Board, and I was 6 years on the Washington County Parks and Open Space Board. I just this month vacated that seat Susan Lindoo was going to take over my seat on the Washington County Parks Board. I was 12 years on the Newport City Council and while on the City Council I was the one that got the Parks Board started. I was the one behind getting the 3 river overlooks renovated and opened up to the public. Here comes John Graber. Also for 12 years I helped with Pioneer Days so that's a lot of recreational programming experience right there. So I come with some formal education but I come with a boat load of working in recreation in one way or another and when certain things come up I think we need to talk about it. My first concern is that.....I understood when we implemented the Parks Board and Emily, you were on the Council at that time as well, about what we wanted the Parks Board to do. There's been some decisions over the years that should have involved the Parks Board and didn't. At least 2 of those decisions did not meet with good ends and I believe that the



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decisions would have been made differently if the Parks Board had been involved. Now when I hear that there's plans of maybe irrigating the fields at Newport Elementary and Loveland Park and isn't being vetted by the Parks Board it raises concerns in my mind that once again, there's a lot of money that's being proposed to be spent on parks and recreational activities and you're not involved in that decision and I think you ought to be. That is one of my concerns. The other 2 decisions.....the one was the ill-faded fishing pier which I do want to talk to you more about at length because I'm hearing that the Council would like to have a fishing pier which is actually a very good idea. So I'd like to get that idea off to a better footing by sharing with you about what I know went wrong with the first fishing pier. The other one was the fence at the end of the Grove Street overlook. The Parks Board wasn't involved in that decision at all and it has had some very negative consequences to how that overlook is being used. For those of you that don't know, I live adjacent to the Grove Street overlook. I know how it was being used and I know it's now not being used and it's because of the fence. The other thing that has been brought up by Council Member Lund is he felt that our parks are underused because of being under programmed. I found that very interesting because currently at the local, county, and state level that's a huge discussion about programming. I want to expand on this a little bit because you're right and everyone that works in recreation is realizing this. It is not enough to have really nice facilities and it doesn't mean that people are going to come or only a few select people come which are the people like you, but for people who aren't like you, particularly immigrant populations or more urban populations don't come to the parks. So how do you get people who are underserved into the parks? How do you get your beautiful facility that isn't being used to be used? So people are turning to programming and I'm just throwing out these ideas so you have a way of thinking about things. Programming is labor intensive and it takes people to run programs and it takes money to run programs. Money is never flush at any level of government so is there a way of getting people to use the parks without having a lot of labor intensity to it? That is why now you're finding with State Parks that now you can rent a canoe at a State Park. You can go to the office and they'll give you a GPS and they'll give you a short introduction on how to use it. They'll let you lose in the park with a GPS for free or you can rent the stand-up paddle boards. You can get kid's fishing equipment for free just borrowing it from the office because they're finding that part of programming is that people don't have the equipment that they need to really enjoy the parks but if the equipment is provided, they're more likely to go to the park because "oh, I can get the fishing pole" or "oh, I can get the snowshoes, I don't have to buy snowshoes". They will add to it maybe once during the winter, a show shoeing instruction day. One example that might illustrate the total of what you're looking at is by just looking at the ice rink in Newport because you're trying to do some programming down there with the family fun night in February. That's programming, well I'll tell you what Duluth is doing. Duluth has a beautiful bay front ice rink and the warming house is to die for. It's got a working fireplace, indoor bathrooms, it's practically carpeted inside. It's a beautiful and very comfortable facility but that doesn't mean people are going to come skate there though. So what have they done? They've got a big outdoor fire ring, one that you can sit on. Every Friday in February they have a bonfire there, around the property they have little trees and then they have the Christmas lights all year round there so it's really attractive. That's a very important point, it has to be attractive to draw people in. What they've also decided to do this year is to address the equipment issue since people don't buy skates for their kids anymore. You can go to the warming house and they'll have skates available. That's something Newport could do and it hits all 3 things. We've got the ice rink and the warming house. What if we planted small specimen trees and then put the white twinkle lights on it all winter long? What if we had 2 or 3 dozen pairs of skates for kids to have for the night? Then a couple times during the winter have a bonfire with cookies and invite people to come down and have the program. That hits all 3, an attractive facility, the equipment people need, and some programming that's not too labor intensive. So when you talk about parks being under used, you



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have to ask why they are being under used and what will get people in without spending too much money and have programming that's not too labor intensive? I just wanted to throw that out to you. At the county parks you can pick up badminton equipment, horseshoes, botchy ball, and volleyball equipment. So when you have your family reunion you can also have equipment and just turn it in at the end. That's another way of getting people to rent your shelter instead of going somewhere else. They provide a lot of equipment that people don't have to put a lot of money into. These things take funding and the other thing that pricked up my ear was when Council Member Lund mentioned that there was \$20,000 in pull tab money. That is very nice sum of money. How should it be used? Is irrigation of the ball fields the best use of the money or are there some other ideas about how to use the money? Is there some way for the Parks Board to have annual funding? I know with Parks Improvement that should all be a part of the capital improvement 5 year plan but the programming needs...I know when Mike Lawton at the library was trying to do a little programming there like having an Easter egg hunt there wasn't 20 bucks in the budget to do it. So when you talk about programming and getting people in the park, you need to have a dedicated funding stream. That's something the Council will need to address. Are they going to every year give you a certain amount? Are they going to say that you get all of the pull tab money to spend? You can't talk programming if you don't have money to back you up with the programming. Now I want to go back to the fishing pier because I think the fishing pier is an excellent idea. When it was first proposed I voted "yes" on it because back then it was an excellent idea. The execution of that idea was very poor and what we ended up with was a non ADA compliant fishing pier and you just can't do it. It's Federal law. I was on record voting "yes" and I was getting feedback from people who were disabled or had disabled family members going, "What's this? This wasn't what I voted for". I've really felt compelled to correct the situation and so we don't have that fishing pier anymore and we shouldn't have it that's not what a municipal fishing pier was supposed to be. The ADA Act is enforced federally but the state helps cities and municipalities interpret it. The woman in charge of that is Margo Imbeke at the state level so it's no mystery what an ADA compliant fishing pier looks like. It's right here in 15 pages and if there's any questions, you can simply call Ms. Imbeke at the state level and she'll come down free of charge and talk to you about what's needed to be ADA compliant. There are even companies, this is one I found, that sells ADA compliant fishing piers. They're already built, you just purchase them. It's not just the fishing pier that has to be ADA compliant. The approach to the fishing pier also has to be ADA compliant and there's no exceptions to this. The federal government doesn't say "oh, you're under 5,000 population you don't have to do this" or "oh, you don't have enough money in your budget so you don't have to do this". It's federal law and we have to do this but there's an interesting clause that says that if you have 2 of something, only one has to be ADA compliant. So if we had 2 fishing piers, only 1 has to be ADA compliant. When the Grove Street overlook went in we put that sidewalk in, a serpentine sidewalk and I don't know how many of you have been down there. The reason for that serpentine sidewalk is we were trying to make it ADA compliant. It doesn't quite make it. So we couldn't say well that's our fishing pier even though people were fishing there. The federal government doesn't really give you any wiggle room here. They've got their grades and you have to meet them and if you don't meet them then you're not compliant. That was the problem with 6<sup>th</sup> Street not only was the pier itself not compliant but the approach down to that pier was not compliant. So when you're looking for a location for the fishing pier you have to keep that in mind that how you get to it also has to meet the grade. None of this is insurmountable, that's why God made engineers. You could make the end of 6<sup>th</sup> Street compliant I have no doubt, I just don't know what the price tag is. Now with the acquisition of property on Cedar Lane, maybe that opens up other possibilities. You could have the fishing pier down there that was ADA compliant and then you can have a second one on the end of 6<sup>th</sup> Street that doesn't have to meet such strict standards. There's things to think about with that fishing pier, I'm just hoping that this time when



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the City really looks at it that they understand that it has to meet federal guidelines and there's no way out of that. That's the 1 point I want to make. Another point I want to make is that the cheapest and fastest way to get people fishing on the Mississippi River is to take down the fence at the end of Grove Street.

**Councilman Lund** – The insurance company asked for that fence, that's why it went up.

**Pauline Schottmuller, 97 10<sup>th</sup> Street** – We'll discuss that at another time Dan. The insurance issue... I don't believe. We looked at it at the time we renovated the property, we had discussions at that time. People used to fish down there almost every night all night long. When the fence first went up last summer, a couple of those families came down but you can't fish over a 4 foot fence. It used to be used every night and all weekend long and it's not being used anymore. The other thing that I want to talk about with you is with the overlooks. The best thing we did at Grove Street was put that sidewalk there. A sidewalk advertises quite loudly that that place is public. When people see a sidewalk they know they're being invited to walk down there. People used to ask me before the sidewalk went in if they could go down there and I would tell them "yeah you can it is public property". I don't get asked that question anymore because they know it is public. The intention was that the Oliver Street overlook would have a sidewalk that connected it to Pioneer Park in some aesthetic way. We were talking at one time that there would be street bricks put along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue there to take you over to the sidewalk that would take you down to that wall.

**Commissioner Tweeten** – I know there's a lot of concern with a sidewalk going in there because Pioneer Park is a children's park with a playground. People are worried about leading children to the river and especially that point in the river because it narrows and it is quick moving.

**Pauline Schottmuller, 97 10<sup>th</sup> Street** – Well they would have to fling themselves over the wall but there wasn't any concern at the other corner where we put a fishing pier.

**Commissioner Tweeten** – Well there is concern about that but by the children's park they were worried.

**Pauline Schottmuller, 97 10<sup>th</sup> Street** – I believe in a sidewalk and some pathway needs to be put in both at the Oliver Street overlook and the 12<sup>th</sup> Street overlook to complete those parks. Part of the original plan involved restoring the stone wall at the top of the Grove Street overlook and none of those things have happened. So you're going to be hearing from me periodically about completing the plans.

**Commissioner Tweeten** – Fill us in on the background of the fence? You said that there was more to that story.

**Pauline Schottmuller, 97 10<sup>th</sup> Street** – I think that's a discussion that's best held in private. It's a very lengthy discussion I don't want to take up that amount of time right now. I'm just throwing this out to you because you're setting your 2016 goals and I just wanted to start the conversation about what your responsibilities are as a Parks Board at least as originally envisioned and if you feel the parks are being under used and programming is the answer then this is to just get you thinking about things. Not that you aren't but when I hear things coming from elsewhere and they're not winding up at this desk, then I get concerned. The Council wouldn't grant a variance or split a lot or anything like that without it going through the Planning Commission first. We shouldn't be talking about impacting the parks without going through you first and I hope that you can make that happen and I thank you for your time. One other



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thing, with the irrigation system and this is me being green. There was an article in the Start Tribune not too long ago and I have run off copies for you but it's talking about cities needing to crack down on wasting water. I think that what's happening at White Bear Lake has highlighted that wasting water has got a really adverse long-term effect on our aquifers and how irrigation systems waste 30% of the water that runs through them because of the fine mist that comes out and evaporates before it even hits the ground. Irrigation systems are a real culprit when wasting water.

**Chairperson White** – I want to welcome John Graber who is the second new Park Board member.

## **5. 2016 GOALS**

**Chairperson White** – I don't want to go into this in detail because we talked about having a workshop and were holding off until we had a full board again. I think that some of the things Pauline has brought up along with some other things we have talked about should be discussed at a workshop. Susan Lindoo has agreed to do the garlic mustard again this year. Every year in the spring toward graduation time we get high school seniors for their service day looking to do work. Last year we got a half dozen or so that came and helped Susan with that. I don't have any dates for that but it is coming up soon.

## **6. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

**Chairperson White** –Newport-on-the-Move is building 5 libraries. We're not calling them "little free libraries" because you have to pay a registration fee. We've got some ideas for what we are going to call them. I am working with others to build a prototype. Four of them will be at our City Parks and the 5<sup>th</sup> one will be in my front yard so kids can access them on the way to Busy Beaver Park. We'll have kids decorate the libraries this summer.

## **7. BOARD REPORTS**

### **A. Anita Perkins**

**Commissioner Perkins** – National Volunteer Week is coming up in April so for those that are picking up the litter on the trails and the weeding, they will be receiving a thank you note in the mail that week. We want to thank them for all their hard work.

**Chairperson White** – We do have quite a few openings for our trails and parks to pick up at least twice a year.

### **B. Heidi Tweeten**

**Commissioner Tweeten** – Regarding the community tree track, I got in touch with Jeff Johnson at the U of M Landscape Arboretum. He is the Landscape Gardener and Woody Plant Specialist. He curates the Bailey Shrub and Tree Walk at the Arboretum. He has a good relationship with the Bailey family so doing something in Bailey School Forest was interesting to him. At the Arboretum they have tree labeling equipment. He had mention that it might be possible for us to take advantage of that. I think we're well on our way and I think he's a wonderful resource to work with.

**Chairperson White** – Do you know what size the labels are?



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**Commissioner Tweeten** – I'm not sure what their machine is capable of but he is going to be sending photos so we can take a look at that.

**Chairperson White** – They must be able to stand up in the weather and that was our biggest concern.

**Commissioner Tweeten** – I don't want to rock the boat with Newport Women-on-the-Move because they are a wonderful group that does so much for our community. The project they've done with putting the libraries in the park is a good example but this is the first we've heard of it and they're going into the parks. I think people attach anything that goes into the parks to us. If this doesn't go well people are going to look to us. I think we really need to have more say in things and we need to connect with Newport Women-on-the-Move and make sure that the things that they do coincide with our goals and what we want to happen. I personally have a concern about the parks getting too cluttered. I think everybody has a good idea and they all want to put something in the park. Is there a main contact person for that group?

**Chairperson White** – It's all of us. I thought I had brought it up at a previous Park Board Meeting. Then we needed Council approval for it and that just happened last week.

**Chairperson White** – John, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

**Commissioner Graber** – I've lived in Newport my whole life, I'm 52 now. I live on the Mississippi River and have been to all the parks obviously. I look forward to being a part of the Park Board and offering whatever help I can.

**Commissioner Hansen** – I've lived in Newport for 15 years. I'm sure many of you know me I'm kind of rabble-rouser at times. I've been retired for 14 years and have a background in culinary arts, I've been an Executive Chef at a number of places throughout the years. I've always wanted to become involved in city government and finally had the opportunity.

**Councilman Lund** – I've got something else to add to your agenda for the year. Recently the Council has taken some interest in making some capital improvements to the parks. We have a new volunteer head of the Newport Athletic Association that's trying to improve the use but our parks are not really comparable to some of the surrounding communities right now. One thing that's already happened was improving the fences. It's important to have a consistent and durable playing surface and that's where irrigation comes in. That's why we're getting estimates, there have been no decisions made. The main action item I want to talk about is having a formal process for reserving fields. It'd be helpful for the Park Board to look at that problem.

**Chairperson White** – We used to have that years ago when I coached tee ball. There was an application process with NAA.

**Councilman Lund** – The current Chair of NAA, Steve Bern, said that field reservations should not be with the athletic association.

**Commissioner Tweeten** – Is this something that we charge for?



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**Councilman Lund** – Not this year, there's only going to be a couple of teams this year but we'd like a more formal process in place for next year. At some point we can charge but I don't think that's important right now.

**Commissioner Tweeten** – I thought the city took care of that.

**Councilman Lund** – That's what we're trying to do but we have no process. We'd like the Park Board to figure it out.

**Chairperson White** – Do we have a form to use the pavilion? South St. Paul has a packet with forms for all of their parks. The application is the same. The whole process should be looked at.

**Councilman Lund** – I think it'd be good to look at that too but as far as athletics it's usually limited to the end of April to the end of July. That's when you need a formal process with a deadline so you can prioritize the use of the fields.

## **8. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**Executive Director Yokiel** – The tree planting along Hastings and some of the other roads associated with the 61/494 project will continue this spring. We ordered 6 concrete picnic tables that'll be fairly permanent in an attempt to prevent vandalism. There will be one at each of the pedestrian landings. One at the small park in front of Fire Hall 2, one at Glen Rd. and 10<sup>th</sup> Ave., and 1 at the 6<sup>th</sup> St. Overlook as well. We also plan on crack filling the trails around town this summer. We are waiting on a quote for irrigation to see what that initial cost would be for Loveland and the school.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Graber, seconded by Hansen to adjourn at 6:53 p.m. With 5 Ayes, 0 Nays, the motion carried.**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Emily White, Chairperson

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Brunick  
Administrative Intern