1. Roll Call

Park Board members in attendance included, Nelson Evenrud, Chris Gabler, Peggy Kvam, Nate Pasko, Elise Raarup and Madeline Seveland. Staff members in attendance included Ann Davy, Jo Colleran, Darin Ellingson, Dave Johnson and Perry Vetter.

Chair Raarup called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

Seveland moved and Kvam seconded a motion to approve the meeting Minutes of January 7, 2015 as submitted. All voted “Yes”. Motion carried.

3. Citizens Wishing to Discuss Items Not on the Agenda

None

4. Business Items

A. Request for a new park in the Meadow Ridge Neighborhood

Colette and Charlie Kraemer, 4056 Hunters Hill Way, presented the park board with a petition signed by 18 residents requesting that the city develop a new park at the end of the cul-de-sac on Meadow Ridge road just west of CR 101 and just north of the regional trail. They indicated that their neighborhood does not have adequate access to a neighborhood park and felt the suggested location could provide the neighborhood with a new park. The Kraemer’s indicated that for the most part all residents they spoke to voiced support for the project, although there were a few concerns mentioned as well by residents in close proximity to the proposed site.

Dave Johnson, Recreation Services Director, noted that the neighborhood in question is located in Neighborhood Park Service Area (NPSA) 14 of the City’s POST plan; adding that there is currently only one park located in NPSA 14 and it is a considerable distance from the suggested location for a new park. Johnson explained that NPSA are defined by barriers such as major roadways that reduce one’s ability to access parks safely and conveniently.

Evenrud asked if there are currently any city goals for a park in NPSA 14. Johnson responded that there were not, however as with other NPSA that are deficient of parkland, the park board is always open to suggestions from staff or the public.

Evenrud asked what activities are currently happening on the site. Charlie Kraemer indicated that only informal use and some illegal dumping of grass and brush.

Raarup asked what the non-supportive comments were. Charlie Kraemer responded that one neighbor indicated that they purchased their house with the understanding from the city
that nothing would ever be developed on the suggested parcel. Johnson noted that he and park board member, Kvam had received a letter from a resident at 17720 Meadow Ridge voicing opposition for several reasons including the loss of a buffer to the trail, access to the park though their neighborhood, the fact that there are other parks within driving distance, and the opportunity for misuse of the park by older kids.

Seveland asked for an explanation of how the site is used for drainage. Darin Ellingson, Parks and Streets Superintendent, reported that the area collects storm water from the north off of Susan Drive and has the ability to have standing water. Charlie Kraemer added that the site remained dry all of 2014.

Johnson noted that there are two potential areas that could be developed with amenities consistent with the “Mini Park” designation the city provides. He explained the two locations as being north portion of the lot and the south portion of the lot parallel to the Regional Trail.

Kvam asked if there were any trail related concerns. Perry Vetter, Assistant City Manager, noted that there have been no discussions to date with Three Rivers Park District, however if the project were to move forward, staff would need to work with them. He suggested that the board refrain from trying to design the park at this time and concentrate more on the need for a park in this area of the city.

Gabler commented that he lives in this neighborhood and supports the idea of a park at this location.

Raarup asked about Bennett Family Park (BFP) located just east of CR101, and specifically asked what is located on BFP property east of the ballfields. Gabler, noted that he serves on the BFP board and responded that there is nothing provided in the way of active recreation in the area that Raarup was referring to. He mentioned there is an old abandoned tennis court and unusable play equipment. He also indicated that there is a conservation easement in place that restricts any added amenities of field development in this area.

Evenrud asked how the city’s natural resources division weighs in on the impact to properties like this that are suggested for park use. Jo Colleran, Natural Resources Division Manager responded that based on any designs that would be developed, her division would analyze any tree loss that would be required and work to protect trees that would remain on site.

Raarup said that she was uncommitted at this time, seeing both sides of the issue (pros and cons for a park at this location). She questioned what the best use of city funding was.

Vetter provided some historical perspective noting that most of the city’s parks were constructed on remnant properties provided by developers in place of park dedication funding. He noted that these properties were often difficult to develop because they were not quality building areas. He said that the size of the parcel dictates the type of park to be
constructed, noting that this parcel would be conducive only to a Mini-Park classification that provide minor amenities and limited parking if any.

Raarup asked staff for guidance on next steps. Johnson suggested that the park board consider a process for receiving resident feedback in a public forum. He noted that the meeting would allow the park board to receive information needed to gauge neighborhood interest, desired amenities from the neighborhood, review funding and get a feel for potential tree loss. Johnson added that information received at this neighborhood meeting could then be used for the park board to consider if funding is justified when they review projects to be included in the 2016 – 2020 Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

Kvam asked staff if the park board considers costs involved in a project like this; and if so, could staff provide cost estimates at a later time. Vetter indicated that based on previous projects, staff could provide estimates for certain amenities.

Hearing no further discussion, Seveland moved and Gabler seconded a motion to direct staff to schedule a neighborhood meeting to consider the request for a park at the end of the Meadow Ridge cul-de-sac to determine resident interest, desired amenities, tree loss impact and review funding options if the park addition is desired. All voted “Yes”. Motion carried.

B. Presentation of the Recreation Services 2014 Program Ratings

Ann Davy, Recreation Services Programming Division Manager, provided background information for this item. She reported that the Recreation Services Programming Division evaluates programs and events that are offered throughout the year by sending evaluations to program participants or main contacts. The programs evaluated are chosen by staff and often differ from year to year. Results are included in the department’s annual report. Davy added that the department has several annual goals relating to the survey outcomes.

Davy explained that her division offers a wide variety of programs, classes, leagues, and events are offered each year. In 2014, participation numbers for all offerings totaled 39,566, and provided the following breakdown of participation:

- Programs/Classes 21,607
- Camps 640
- Specialty Programs 396
- Youth Sports 1,083
- Adult Sports 11,248
- Special Events 5,700

Davy explained that in order to continue to improve our programs and services, it is important to gather feedback from the participants. The process of sending surveys allows her division to gain an understanding of what we are doing well and where changes may be needed. She cited an example of receiving concerns from adult softball users of Big Willow
Park that parking was inadequate. From these concerns, Davy explained that Public Works redesigned and added parking at Big Willow which has now eliminated the problem.

Davy explained that there are ten key areas included on all surveys and tracked from year to year. Often staff will include additional questions in order to gain information about a specific aspect of a program. She reported that in 2014, surveys were sent to participants of 23 different programs. A total of 330 survey responses were received. Recreation Services strives to keep the “Above Average” and “Excellent” ratings in the 80% and above range. While percentages for these areas were down in most areas from 2013, responses were still very favorable. In comparison, ratings in 2013 increased from 2012 in nine of the ten key areas surveyed. Results have been reviewed by program managers to determine what changes can be implemented in 2015 to improve programs and services.

Gabler commented that he was impressed with the high evaluation ratings given that feedback is often only received from those participants that have a concern.

Evenrud commented that he appreciated the variety of programs offered and knows firsthand the difficulty in staffing such programs.

The park board thanked Davy for the programs and services offered and had no changes to the questions asked in the surveys.

C. Adoption of the 2015 Park Board Strategic Plan

Johnson reported that at the January 7, 2015 meeting, the park board reviewed and made changes to their Strategic Plan including the mission, vision and goals included. He noted that staff has made revisions as directed at the January meeting for the park board to review. Johnson provided an updated draft of the 2015 Park Board Strategic Plan for the board’s review.

Evenrud moved and Seveland seconded a motion to adopt the park board’s 2015 Strategic Plan, including the board’s mission, vision, goals and objectives as drafted. All voted “yes”. Motion carried.

D. Parks for tomorrow update

Colleran provided background to this item noting that the park board developed the Parks for Tomorrow Program which was intended to commemorate the lives, celebrations, special occasions or achievements of Minnetonka’s citizens while reforesting city parkland or providing another park amenity such as a bench. Colleran explained that in 1995, the park board recommended city council approval of the Parks for Tomorrow Program. The council adopted resolution 95-9870 approving the Parks for Tomorrow Program on March 27, 1995.
She noted that since the inception of the program, approximately 140 people have been recognized with trees and park benches.

Colleran explained that this past summer city staff received an inquiry from a resident who wanted to plant a tree in a park, in remembrance of her late husband. During review of the Parks for Tomorrow brochure, staff realized that the information in the brochure does not accurately reflect the current planting practices or costs associated with planting a tree or erecting a structure such as a bench.

Colleran reviewed changes being recommended to the Parks for Tomorrow brochure, including:

- Increase the cost of planting a young sapling tree from the current price of $25 to $125 - $150 to better reflect actual costs.
- Increase the cost of planting a recognition tree from the current price of $150 - $200 to $300 - $500, watering the tree for three years, and replacing the donated tree if it dies within that time frame.
- Increase the contribution amount to the special projects fund from $500 or more to a cost that is generally $700 - $1000, with the exact cost dependent on the options selected.

Colleran asked for feedback from the park board.

Kvam asked about the Minnetonka Parks Priority List and what that involves. Colleran explained that the Parks Division manages that list which includes a broader listing of various park needs that might be donated by interested donors.

Raarup noted that she assumed the city does not profit from the Parks for Tomorrow program. Colleran confirmed that the city did not profit from the program.

Hearing no further comments, Kvam moved and Gabler seconded a motion to approve the changes to the Parks for Tomorrow program as drafted by staff and forward to the city council for consideration. All voted “yes”. Motion carried.

5. Park Board Member Reports

Kvam reported that there are several trees located on city property near Mud Lake that are in poor shape and subject to falling. She noted that this is an area that includes several informal trails not maintained by the city and wondered if staff could look at the trees to determine if they could be taken down. Ellingson noted that staff would look at the situation and report back to the board in March.

Raarup mentioned a recent story in the Star Tribune related to outdoor ice rinks and refrigerated systems. She noted interest given the park board’s CIP project that includes the possibility of doing something similar at Big Willow Park.
6. Information Items

Johnson reviewed the park board's 2014 annual report included in the meeting packet and made two minor changes as requested by the board. He noted that the report will now be forwarded to the city council.

Johnson reported that the organizer of the 1st annual Hopkins Royal Triathlon held last August at Shady Oak Beach has made a $3,500 donation to the Recreation Services Richard Wilson Scholarship Fund for children in need of financial assistance for recreation programs.

Vetter reported that Ann Cullen-Smith has passed away, noting that the city had acquired her property to be used for agreed upon passive recreational use upon her passing.

7. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

Johnson reviewed the park board's 6-month schedule noting that the Meadow Ridge Park neighborhood meeting would be added to the March 4, 2015 meeting.

8. Adjournment

Raarup adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.