



MEETING NOTES

Rochester Parks & Recreation Master Plan – Advisory Committee Meeting #2

November 19, 2015

5:30. – 7:30 p.m.

City of Rochester Northern Hill Golf Course, Clubhouse

Attendees:

Martha Mangan, Joanne Judge-Deitz, Amy Eich, Ed Hruska, Kelly Corbin, Pam Meyer, Larry Mortenson, Jeff Ellerbush, Renee Lafflam, and Vern Yetzer; Rita Trapp and Anna Springer from HKGi; Mike Nigbur and Paul Widman from City of Rochester.

1. Meeting Introduction

As there were many new faces, the consultant team introduced themselves and Advisory Committee members then did a quick introduction of themselves, including what organization(s) they represent. The purpose and agenda of the night's meeting was then reviewed. Advisory Committee members were asked if there were any changes to the notes from the previous Advisory Committee meeting, and it was agreed that the notes were accurate.

2. Overview of System Evaluation and Needs Assessment

The consultant team provided an overview of the system evaluation and needs assessment work done to date, including community engagement, distribution and gap analysis, and peer community and national standards comparisons. Committee members were asked to share any thoughts on this, resulting in a discussion about:

- Pools in Rochester; survey responses indicated a desire for additional pools in Rochester, and while there are pools at the Rochester Athletic Club, the YMCA, and nearby communities, many people cannot afford access to these pools.
- The relevance of population density when looking at the distribution of and access to parks and amenities in residential areas, including areas where new high density housing is being built.
- Current analysis of baseball/softball and basketball and tennis does not reflect school facilities, which are open to public use.
- Kayaking occurs in areas that aren't mapped in the distribution analysis--willow creek and reservoirs.
- National standard for gym space seems low. Generally it seems like there is never enough space during prime use times.
- There is a need to balance standards for park design with individual neighborhood needs/desires. It was noted that the City conducted a process for neighborhood input when designing Fox Trails and Bamber Valley Estates neighborhood parks.
- Neighborhood income in relationship to facilities would be interesting to map; southeast has gaps and has a high proportion of low income households.
- It would be good to know if the athletic fields of peer communities are irrigated or not.
- Peer communities were selected based upon their similarity to Rochester in population, standing in the Midwest as a regional hub/standalone city, and frequently made comparisons.

3. Advisory Committee Input

Advisory Committee members were asked to share their thoughts on key findings from the system evaluation and needs assessment in a group exercise. Categories of findings were provided by the consultants, and included park accessibility, facility mix, natural areas, programming, system condition, mobility, and operations. Advisory committee's key findings were then compared with those of the consultants. The following discussions/comments were had:

- Park Accessibility
 - Populations outside city limits want to be on large lots and don't necessarily want a lot of amenities nearby. There are no known plans for future annexation of existing developments.
 - How do you encourage people who don't use the system to participate in this study? In particular, outreach to minorities about parks may be needed. Is there a way to incorporate focus groups in addition to the listening session that targeted diverse populations, or a way to go to them? Mayo clinic has a focus group that does a lot of work with minority groups that may be a potential contact.
- Facility Mix
 - Dog parks should be a greater part of the facility mix.
 - Indoor facilities are a desire that came up in the online questionnaire comments.
 - Monkey Junction is an affordable, private indoor playground that is highly utilized in the winter.
- Programming
 - Public art and art partnerships should be incorporated into the system. Currently parks seem very functional and are lacking an artsy component.
 - Online questionnaire revealed a desire for nature-based education programming. A future need for access to nature is growing, and there is research that shows the benefits of interaction with nature and the negative consequences of too little interaction with nature.
- System Condition
 - The term 'Green infrastructure' is jargon. Use 'sustainability' to describe things like stormwater filtration, rain gardens, etc.
 - Perhaps the system condition assessment made by the consultants is too kind.
 - Questionnaire comments reflect a common concern about building/bathroom conditions;.
 - Break out buildings/pools from 'green space'/other to provide more detailed/accurate assessment.
- Operations
 - The presence of recreation organizations may be too strong; for example girls softball fields feel like they are closed to those outside the organization.
 - Need to publicize and tell the public about the cost of parks and park amenities. 1% of all CIP funds for the City went to parks. Need to create awareness around the current underfunding the parks. 50% of current development money is coming from developers. Misconceptions about funding, costs, and maintenance amongst the public.
 - Do any of the wish list items from the questionnaire present opportunities for public/private partnerships? Do any of the desired amenities exist privately already?
 - The relationship between the City and the school district should be described as an opportunity.
 - Public perception about who provides what is sometimes inaccurate.
 - Volunteer coordination is needed as there is a large untapped resource there.

4. Next Steps

Next steps of additional community engagement and objectives of the next Advisory Committee meeting were shared.