



Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Parks for All 2021 Comprehensive Plan
Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #3

4/21/2020 5:00-7:00pm
Zoom Online Video Call

CAC Members Present: Carly Bad Heart Bull (CAC Chair), Zev Radziwill, David Hartwell, Hilary Lovelace, Dan Miller, David Motzenbecker, Mira Klein, Eleanor Skarbarus, Lynne Crockett, Mary McKelvey

CAC Members Absent: Alyssa Olson, Daniel Cheng, Lolita Davis Carter, Gerrod Williams, Jake Virden, Saed Y, Haji, Shree Varuna

MPRB Staff Present: Carrie Christensen (Project Manager), Adam Arvidson, Radious Guess, Siciid Ali, Madeline Hudek, and Alyssa Gilmore, Zoe Hollomon (Youth Design Team Instructor) and 1 member of the Youth Design Team.

Public Attendance: Around 5 members of the general public present

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Parks for All Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3 (CAC #3) was called to order around 5:02pm by Carly Bad Heart Bull (CAC Chair). Carly began the meeting by thanking everyone for adapting to the new virtual meeting world and teaching everyone the Dakota word “Wicozani” which means “good health”. Carly quickly ran through the agenda for the evening and the CAC’s group agreement. There were additional Online Meeting Ground Rules that were shared and Carly reminded CAC members that the Group Agreement is a living document and that folks can communicate any suggestions they may have to Carrie or Alyssa through Chat or Email. Alyssa Gilmore went through a quick Zoom Meeting Tutorial before Carly Bad Heart Bull asked for introductions from the CAC, Youth Design Team, Project Staff, and members of the public present.

After introductions, the CAC was reminded to utilize the “Seed Bed”, a place to plant ideas thoughts, questions, and concerns throughout the CAC process. This tool was adapted for the online meeting platform by using the chat function to facilitate the seed bed. It was communicated to the CAC that Project Staff would be making sure to add those comments in the chat box to the seed bed and would continue to follow up on things as they come up.

(CAC Member *in chat*) Concerns about the process the CAC is going through in this process as well as the facilitation of this process.

(MPRB staff) Reasons for not sharing the letter with the CAC are discussed in the Open Meeting Guidelines section of the presentation. The letter referenced by this CAC Member can be found at the bottom of this notes document.

(CAC Member *in chat*) I was wondering if any public comments so far for 2020 have stood out as noticeably different from the last time the process happened—the Comprehensive Plan for 2007-2020. Looking at the values stated in the former Comprehensive Plan you included in our binder might also be helpful as a benchmark to see if Minneapolis Parks are on track or need to change direction. *STAFF NOTE: The annual reports are the best place to currently track progress on the 2007 comprehensive plan, and those can be found here:*
<https://www.minneapolisparks.org/about-us/leadership-and-structure/superintendent/superintendents-annual-reports/>

The Wall of Park Equity was also adapted for online use using the chat function. Carrie explained that this is a grounding tool used to continue to bring equity into the conversation, to remind us what an equitable park and recreation system looks like to folks with different lived experiences. Carrie read off some of the ideas, and told those in attendance if they'd like to see anything added to the wall, they could do so via the chat function.

(Youth Design Team) Meaningful career opportunities for youth!

ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE, OPEN MEETING GUIDELINES, ETC.

Carrie Christensen (Project Manager) read out the charge for the Parks for All CAC Members which clarifies the roles that the CAC will take on throughout this process.

Adam Arvidson clarified Open Meeting Laws for the Community Advisory Committee. The MPRB CAC's are not behold to Open Meeting Laws, however there is still significant consideration for making sure the CAC meeting process is transparent. We want to make sure that any group project related questions, comments, and discussions happen in full view of the public. Because email is not a physically accessible space, email communications to the CAC need to be one way communications from MPRB Staff to the CAC, and not conversations among CAC. Anything that is sent by email must be made available to the public in some way. We are beholden to other rules for these public meetings as well, we must advertise the CAC meetings at least ten days in advance and will have to advertise any subgroup meetings. We have an MPRB notetaker at all public meetings, and those notes are published in an accessible format online. The subgroups, which we will talk more about later in the meeting, in terms of agenda, schedule, and format can be led by CAC members but these also are meetings that must be open to the public, advertised in full, with a record of notes. We want to ensure that there is transparency around these public processes. We also want to make sure to create room to connect with one another and shape this process together.

(CAC Member *in chat*) Would like individual CAC feedback to be shared with full CAC received by email based on other board/committee experience.

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND UPDATES

Carrie Christensen talked about the Project Scope and the Project Timeline for the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is meant to be a document developed by multiple groups of people. The Comprehensive Plan affects all the work that the MPRB will do over the next decade, will act as a communication tool, set and reinforce our values, build off of what works, and identify gaps within our system. We are still hoping to remain on the original timeline that we had set. The Youth Design Team is working on the same timeline as the CAC, and the seven workgroups have continued to meet over the past several months. This meeting is meant to be an additional meeting to the 5 that were initially planned and is intended to be used as space for project and process reflection in the world of online engagement. Hopefully, the CAC will be able to move into the policy recommendation process at their next meeting.

For the past year we have been collecting input from the Community, which the CAC members reviewed in their previous meeting in a Data Jam. At this point in the process we have a lot of initial input, with close to 5,000 people having responded. We've gathered this input online, from community events, etc. We have had over 100 text engagements from all over the city in response to lawn signs we placed in the summer, over 300 of our multipage survey have been completed, which also has had a great demographic response rate. The [online survey](#) closes May 1st so CAC members were encouraged to fill it out and continue to share it with their networks. The MPRB also did a statistically valid [citywide survey](#). Other voices involved in the process besides the CAC are the Youth Design Team, Workgroup Members, and Community Collaborator groups.

Adam Arvidson took a quick moment to interject and address a concern posed in the chat box from a CAC member. This meeting was specifically designed to create a forum to address the concerns about the project process. Emails of CAC members weren't shared because it would have led to discussion outside of CAC meetings. Regardless of what the conversations are about, they need to happen so that everyone has the opportunity to be present. There are opportunities within this meeting to raise concerns about the process this far, but those concerns need to be shared within the context of one of the meetings to be as transparent as possible.

Hopefully we'll be moving toward policy recommendations together as a CAC in our next meetings, and we've already started this process by convening workgroups comprised of technical experts and MPRB staff. These Workgroups (Arts, Culture and History; Climate Resilience; Gentrification and Displacement; Multigenerational; Public Health; Public Safety; Water Resources) have met several times and have begun transitioning to being held in a virtual format utilizing breakout rooms to hold policy workshops. One of the things that the workgroups have been responding to are a set of 8 futures that will affect our work over the course of the next decade. These 8 futures were developed as a result of research, workshops with the commissioners, and staff conversations.

1. A more diverse city—demographically speaking Minneapolis is becoming more diverse. People of color make up a larger percentage of the overall population and the number of different races and ethnicities continues to increase. This is likely to become even more pronounced as we potentially host climate refugees.
2. A denser city—The Minneapolis 2040 plan envisions a denser city, with higher per unit housing stock across the entire city. As the population continues to increase, the city will continue to densify.
3. An aging population—we have an aging demographic, a large cohort of baby boomers.
4. A sustained and increased wealth gap—the wealth gap that exists now has been growing for some time and will continue to grow we believe. Alongside this, people's power has begun to shift now. We see more power being held by people of color and people with lower wealth, which you can see through elected officials at all levels of government. Although the power shift is a sign that the wealth gap may shift in time, it will not yet tip in favor of balancing out within the next decade.
5. Infrastructure is aging—This is true for both partners (City of Minneapolis) and MPRB infrastructure. A lot of our infrastructure was built around the same time as well which poses issues. All our recreation centers were pretty much built within a decade (1970s) all the pedestrian bridges along Minnehaha Creek were essentially built in the same year. This means that we must think about failing infrastructure occurring simultaneously.
6. Wetter City—There have been seven years of rain in the past six years, more flooding, etc.
7. Fewer wild plants and animals—There has been both a reduction in species diversity as well as the biomass and volume of plants and animals in the world. There have been reported 60x decreases in insect life even in natural areas, bird species and numbers are declining.
8. A more digitally connected and technologically reliant population—Real world context from today.

Project Staff also quickly walked through the policy recommendation worksheet that the workgroups have been using, which asks the Workgroup members to think about the future, power and context of the MPRB, what the policy recommendation is around a key topic, and how we could measure it. We hope to revisit this process in a deeper way with the CAC and want to spend more time discussing and getting them involved in this process.

FOCUS GROUPS

We analyzed the community engagement information, staff and commissioner input to look at what the most important topics are to folks. We are planning on holding focus groups around these topics. Some of these focus groups will be held online in a similar Zoom format, others will be conducted through surveys, convening committees, looking at available data, etc. We are still thinking through ways of holding these conversations and some of them, like active seniors, is on hold with hopes to hold it in person. CAC Members were asked to contact Carrie if they would like to participate in a focus group that is significant to them and their expertise or experience.

(CAC Member *in chat*) What is a white paper and SAMP analysis?

(Project Staff *in chat*) SAMP stands for Service Area Master Plan. *Staff note: White paper is a summary of national trends and the recommendations from the service area master plans.*

(CAC Member *in chat*) How does a member of the public join one of these focus groups if they are passionate about it?

Staff Note: Please let staff know and if the focus group has not already taken place, we will invite you.

OPEN TIME

(Public and Project Staff) Conversation by comment log about recording the meeting. See chat function.

(Public) Concerned about not recording this meeting so that others can access it at another date if they aren't able to log on to Zoom. Feels like Project Staff are driving this top down and aren't following through on consulting with groups until after decisions have already been made. Very familiar with the parks, volunteer regularly in parks, familiar with the gaps in protections for natural areas, wildlife and ecological function. Would like to see explicit writing in the comprehensive plan that addresses ecological function, would like to hear more conversation surrounding wildlife, we need wildlife as much as they need us. These issues shouldn't be addressed in an add on later, this should be a core part of the Comprehensive Plan. Part of the reason we are in a pandemic is because of the abuse of nature by humans. We need to give voice to all living beings and integrate this into the plan. The parks aren't land to fill up with amenities. Passive recreation needs to be supported (bird watching, forest bathing, nature and wildlife observation, etc.). Equity means equity for all living beings. This gap should be filled and there should be a serious workgroup and policy conversation about this. Not just see this as an opportunity to cram things into every corner of the parks.

(CAC Chair) Thanked them for their valuable input. The intent of tonight's meeting is to continue to stay engaged with the project and to give the CAC a better understanding of the process and where these groups and ideas are being put to paper, where they aren't and where they need to be. There are more opportunities to be sure that these ideas will come into the bigger picture. Want to make sure that ecological and wildlife considerations are made as well

(Public) Appreciate that Carly responded to their comment/concerns. Concerned still that this was brought up over 6 months ago and was assured that this would be parks for all beings and not just parks for human beings. Have been pushing for this but don't see the responsiveness on the part of the staff.

(Project Staff) Months ago concerns around wildlife habitat and natural areas was discussed. When those conversations happened, we weren't yet at a place to hold those focus groups and have more detailed conversations, we're only getting to that place now. With the launch of the ecological systems plan we are planning on holding conversations around that. We are moving a little more slowly in response to a rapidly shifting work environment and appreciate the patience on all ends.

(Project Staff *in chat*) There is a focus group that will include many perspectives on the ideas of habitat and ecology. Audubon and Constance, we are planning to invite you to that! That is the "Habitat Love" focus group.

(Youth Design Team *in chat*) The Youth Design Team certainly will have environmental sustainability, climate change, and wildlife conservancy as part of our policy recommendations for the Comp plan.

(Public) Representing Friends of the Lock and Dam. First thanked the CAC for experimenting with an online process and their commitment to community engagement. Friends of the Lock and Dam are going to be renamed "Friends of the Falls" and are currently doing their own community engagement around an upcoming project that is meant to repurpose the shut down lock and dam on the central riverfront, converting it to a major community asset by opening up the riverfront (via boating, recreation, and connections to other riverfront sites). Friends of the Falls seek the community's input as they explore the possibility of a visitor/interpretive center with a strong focus on the indigenous people who occupied this site. Want to step up and engage the community in an authentic and honest way that tells the economic, cultural and social story of the site, using the lock and dam as a vehicle for that. This project starts with MPRB adopting Central Riverfront Masterplan and will continue with engagement over the summer. The Friends of the Falls are planning on relaunching their website with rebranding and announcements, etc. and are also working on transitioning to an online format but are making sure there will be a variety of ways to engage. Working with community, city MPRB, and would love to have a preliminary concept design in February of 2021.

(CAC Member *in chat*) Love the name update... and excited about the vision... thanks for sharing this info!

(Public *in chat*) It spears there is little or no differentiation between regional parks (emphasis on Nature-based opportunities) and city parks (emphasis on built amenities). It appears regional parks are simply turning into large city parks, to the point of introducing undefined "secondary recreation activities" into the regional parks policy plan, which risks the integrity of this nature-based park system, and not one that is supported by most visitors who come to these parks for respite from the built environment. It's a concerning shift in direction and one that is

unsustainable both from an environmental perspective and a financial perspective. How are you distinguishing between a regional parks setting from a city park?

(Project Staff *in chat*) The difference between regional and neighborhood parks is an administrative one that has to do with funding rules and the Metropolitan Council's jurisdiction over planning requirements. We have 19 regional parks and trails and about 160 neighborhood parks.

(Public *in chat*) Thanks, I am very aware of that and my concern is there is a growing overlap in built amenities within regional parks which is diminishing the nature-based opportunities that regional parks offer.

CAC ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Radios Guess helped to facilitate the Roundtable discussion. She began by first outlining the previous CAC #2 meeting, where folks analyzed community and staff comments in small groups and compiled a list of themes present in the data. CAC members were asked to take a few minutes to look over the list, find topics they resonate with, topics they think the park board should focus on the next decade, and why.

- **Senior Programming**—Benefits and impact. Research shows that older adults who participate in senior center programs can learn to manage and delay the onset of chronic disease and experience measurable improvements in their physical, social, spiritual, emotional, mental, and economic well-being.
- **Youth Programming**—Youth development programs help youth navigate adolescence in health ways and prepare them for their future by fostering their positive development.
- **Family programming**—Family involvement is crucial because that means parents and caregivers work together with teachers to build the optimal environment for learning, both in the childcare setting and in the home.
- **Equity and inclusion** are really important especially in this pandemic. There are a lot of discriminations built upon this pandemic and I hope our park system could play a positive role in **bringing people from different backgrounds together**. We will want to think about how we can involve diverse community groups in the planning and design of our parks to facilitate the **participation of diverse stakeholders**. With family, the first destination is a park or a library.
- **More transparent data infrastructures to communicate with the public** is also very important
- **Equitable access**: how do we provide quality parks that meet the recreation needs and interests of everyone in the community?
- **Climate Resilience**: parks have so many benefits in climate resilience, but in an urban area, we have to look at the larger picture of climate change. Could we encourage more urban development and density near parks and in the city as a whole to limit exurban sprawl?



- **Recreation and Transportation:** We often think that parks are only for recreation, but with great trails that are plowed well in the winter, how do we think about parks as a transportation amenity and begin planning with that in mind.
- After processing the list through the lens of current pandemic conditions, have been thinking about **how COVID has pointed out underlying inequities** and flaws in our socio-economic systems. Looking at these topics within this lens (ex. Relationship between park access and areas of higher air pollution and asthma, an underlying condition that makes COVID more deadly).
- **Free food in parks and current mutual aid efforts** and how we can bolster those efforts.
- **housing and houselessness**
- **Passive recreation in parks:** seems like the parks are focused on active recreation and there are less places to sit and be still or take a quiet walk. Would like to see more forested areas and space for 'forest bathing' (nature therapy). Want to see a **balance of wild and manicured spaces**. Would like to see **more green infrastructure and park land dedicated to stormwater management** that could also act as passive recreation spaces.
- **Health and Wellness:** Touch on physical health a lot, but also want parks to be spaces that facilitate mental and spiritual health and connection.
- **Environmental sustainability** for the parks is really important. Have noticed incremental taking away of the environment for active recreation and would like to see an actual balance between passive and active recreation. Not happy with project proposals that effect bird health and **habitat**, or taking away wilderness areas. Don't see the balance, don't see design decisions made with ecological considerations (e. bird friendly windows on buildings). Environmental sustainability is missing and shouldn't be.
- **Inclusion and racial equity**
- **Natural Restoration and preservation:** along the riverfront, it is awesome to see all the work that is being done and what can be achieved.
- **Name reclamation and historical perspective:** would love to see more of this done throughout
- **Access and transportation** and having access to high quality parks, making sure that anyone can get to a variety of different kinds of parks.
- **Music:** provides an opportunity for youth to get involved, create job opportunities with different art pieces that represent the community, can be an avenue to give voice to folks.
- **Indigenous language reclamation:** indigenous language reclamation and the many ways that can happen - land, plants, signage...as well as indigenous story and history from a Native perspective. Indigenous history is Minnesota history and we have stories for the places at all of our parks...and our kids need to know them (Native and non-Native). Indigenous wisdom and story can benefit us all - from physical health to beyond.
- **Transportation** getting to the place, don't want to see this forgotten. Can build off the City of Minneapolis' Transportation Action Plan. Should focus on getting people to the

parks, getting people to the Grand Rounds, etc., making a better effort than what has been done so far.

- **Community Engagement:** Members of her community have been actively engaged in working with the parks and don't feel heard, have had to talk with legislators.
- **Maintenance and the Opioid Crisis:** Safety with syringes, children don't always know what they are and might play with them and accidentally injure themselves.
- **Emergency related policy** (Severe weather, COVID)
- **Equity and Park Events:** Don't seem to be large events on the Northside.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** People of color don't feel heard or like MPRB are listening as decisions are being made. Feels like decisions are being made for these communities without their input, being told what they need.
- **Maintenance of Buildings and Pools**
- **Intergenerational programming**
- **Programming for youth outside of sports**
- **Tree Canopy Preservation**
- **Public Health improvement through parks:** Thinking in the lens of the pandemic, a lot of the topics have to do with using the park, public health and wellness is a big umbrella for this; these are interconnected topics that need to be addressed simultaneously.
- From a youth perspective there is **youth development a youth jobs**, having **diverse programming** (different activities, educational opportunities).
- **Water and Waste Management:** have heard a lot from the community about water and waste management. It's important to think about the environment when thinking about the future of the park system, and the fact that we are going to be planning for a wetter future.
- Public Health improvement through parks. Thinking in the lens of the pandemic, a lot of the topics have to do with using the park, public health and wellness is a big umbrella for this; these are interconnected topics that need to be addressed simultaneously.
- Looking at the current 2007-2020 Comprehensive Plan, interested in finding out what kinds of progress has been made toward the current values. Instead of reinventing the wheel, looking at what we need to go father in same direction, and where we may need to add new direction.

(Project Staff) This could be a subgroup, if we wanted to have a conversation outside of the CAC about Park Board Values

PARK SUMMIT

[The Park Summit](#) will take place over a virtual format, and has been postponed from the original May 7th date to May 21st. The idea is to bring together the seven workgroups, CAC members, Youth Design Team members, PAC members, and the commissioners to dive into sharing out their recommendations and looking for cross over. The Park Summit will be open to the public as well. The Park Summit will allow for all those who have been involved in the

process to connect with each other, hear each other's recommendations, and look for connections across the topic areas and perspectives. Project Staff is currently considering several options for what the Park Summit could look like in this new virtual world. Park Staff is also looking for feedback from the CAC on if there are any ideas around the public comment period and how we can engagement community in the Summer and Fall in the midst of COVID.

(Public *in chat*) I think it's important to record the Parks Summit. Regarding the process—given the pandemic, it seems important to slow it down and allow sufficient number of meetings and time rather than having a big Parks Summit. That plan should be re-assessed in light of the pandemic, just as every plan needs to be. There is no reason to rush this plan and every reason to not rush it, in order to allow sufficient input and discussion by CAC members.

(CAC Member *in chat*) The plan is to do a virtual summit? That will leave a lot of people out of the conversation

(CAC Member) Thank you for laying out some options for the process moving forward. I would like to see dedicated time for recommendations, and in future meetings use the majority of our time together for those discussions. Providing the background information about this project at the beginning of the presentation is helpful and important, but it takes away time to talk amongst ourselves. I would like have a facilitated two hour discussion about what CAC members care about. It's important to take a bigger chunk of time to do this, and earlier on in the meeting so people don't burn out.

(Project Staff) That is great feedback for how the process can be improved to address concerns, thank you!

(CAC Member *in chat*) Will the parks be open in May?

(Project Staff) The parks will remain open; the recreation centers will remain closed through the summer and foreseeable future. We have been following the general agency guidance to not having any large in person gatherings.

(CAC Member *in chat*) Is the data aggregated as to how many people have been concerned about each topic? In this age of zoom and video, I think it would be a good idea to take videos.

STAFF NOTE: The aggregated data can be found on the Parks for all Story Map and we will continue to find ways to share out what has been heard on the project website.

(Project Staff) Yes, the data is organized in terms of what is most important to community, we have more information about where data collection has taken place, and summaries about what we've heard on the [Parks for All: Story Map](#).

(CAC Member) I want my letter shared with all the members of the CAC. We don't have to discuss it outside of the meeting, it would be helpful background. We do this in the Council I am a member of, we share letters with the entire council and talk about them at the meeting. Refusal to send it out is irritating and disrespectful and I encourage you to send it.

(Project Staff) Would you like to take the time now to voice the concerns from the letter?

(CAC Member) Concerns with facilitation of meetings, lack of environmental concern, staff are driving this process without input from the CAC. You are putting in place what staff wants to come up with as a plan instead of letting the CAC do its job. We aren't hearing from the public

other than reading through 5,000 comments. The entire process is set up to not take the CAC seriously/

(Project Staff) We mentioned earlier on in the meeting why we weren't able to share the letter by email in order to ensure the letter was publicly accessible for transparency. If you'd like to read your letter or share content from it in the chat that is one way to make that information available publicly. We are also taking notes which will be shared with the public on our project page. We are thinking of creative ways to bring in additional facilitation during this virtual transitioning process. The charge of this CAC to provide recommendations to Park Board Staff and Park Board Commissioners and so we have to play a facilitation role in this committee. We really appreciate the feedback, this meeting was set up in response to concerns that were raised in the letter, this was meant to be a pause to reflect on the process and create a platform that encourages feedback.

(Chat) There were a few more comments about the letter *referenced is included at the end of this notes document.*

(Public *in chat*) Can the May 1st date be extended given the pandemic? Yikes, a four-hour Parks Summit seems unrealistic—please reconsider that plan. Everything has changed with the pandemic. It is not realistic to expect people to be online for 4 hours!

(Youth Design Team *in chat*) I think the idea of doing a 4 hour Summit will allow for people to come and go to the summit as they are able.

(CAC Member *in chat*) I share the same sentiment!

(Project Staff *in chat*) The Park Summit has been pushed back to May 21st.

STAFF NOTE: The Park Summit is now going to take place from May 26th to June 1st. Details forthcoming. It will be a weeklong online summit. Details on project website at www.minneapolisparcs.org/parksforall.

(Project Staff) We are not expecting to have 4 hours of programmed content, we are currently exploring logistical options for the Park Summit.

(Project Staff) Seeing the comments come in through the chat are great, we are trying to encourage using the 'raise hand' function on Zoom and continue to figure out ways to hold conducive conversations over this platform. How do we move forward next, would we like to keep continuing to meet via Zoom? Does the meeting take a different form to allow for more conversation? Should there be specific subgroups that get together to address specific topics?

(CAC Member *in chat*) Perhaps we can revisit the innovative ideas that people brought to the second meeting and use it as generative materials?

(CAC Member) I received the letter through a different network than the CAC and I wanted to express that I have felt the opposite. I appreciate all the outreach and engagement that MPRB staff have done before involving the CAC; it provides information to read and respond to during these meetings. I enjoyed the Data Jam, which was an opportunity not to hear solely from particularly passionate people that have the time and ability, but to hear from people all across the city. Really appreciated the way in which we have learned about community engagement over a long period of time across the city and the work that has been accomplished so far. In

the future I would like to have more time to discuss as a CAC. Although I appreciate the project review and the thoughtfulness that goes into that, it would be helpful to get to discussion more quickly.

(Youth Design Team) Going back to the Park Summit, I think it's important to consider reaching out to the youth better than we have in the past and to let them know that the Park Summit is happening. If we are serious about involving youth voices we need to reach out better, most teens aren't on Facebook and aren't signing up for email lists.

(CAC Member) After the Park Summit we will have a draft plan that will be presented to the public, will the CAC have an opportunity to respond after that?

(Project Staff) Yes! We are trying to stick to our original timeline, getting the plan to the Board of Commissioners by the end of 2020. *(STAFF NOTE: Following the next CAC meeting, the project next steps include: **May:** Focus groups and forums; **May 26-June 1 Park Summit (online):** CAC, workgroups, and Youth Design Team will share their policy recommendations with each other, and identify gaps and connections. There is no formal CAC meeting during this time but CAC members are encouraged to plug in throughout the week. A detailed schedule will be released soon!; **June-July:** Plan drafting (writing and graphic design by staff and consultants); **August-Sept:** Draft plan goes out for 45-day public comment period for the public to provide feedback (CAC will meet to provide feedback on the draft); **Oct:** Plan revisions based on public comment period feedback; **Nov/Dec:** Revised plan goes to MPRB Board of Commissioners for review and adoption*

(CAC Member) With everything that is going on, we should continue to encourage people to fill out the survey. We could be asking questions about what people think about the parks and how they are using them and enjoying them in different ways now that things have changed so much.

(Project Staff) Hearing that folks are interested in meeting again, didn't hear otherwise, interested in focusing on policy recommendation process at the next meeting in mid-May, dedicating the full two hours to the CAC break out group discussions?

(CAC in chat) Works for me!

EVALUATION, THANKS, AND NEXT STEPS

Feedback on the CAC meeting could be given here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PFA-CAC3>

Project Staff solidified that the next meeting would be focused entirely on the policy recommendation process. CAC Members will get packets in advance to help streamline the meeting so that less time is dedicated to review.

Project Staff thanked people for attending, know that it is a work in progress. We hope that you all stay safe and healthy!

ADJOURN: 7:04pm



March 9, 2020

Jono Cowgill
2117 West River Road North
Minneapolis, MN 55411

Dear Commissioner Cowgill,

When it was suggested that I apply for a position as a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee for the Parks for All Comprehensive Plan, I assumed that the CAC would be asked to do real work that would take significant effort on the part of the members. Having participated in more than 40 strategic planning efforts in my professional career, with companies, non-profit organizations and governmental bodies, I made the decision to apply with a reasonable understanding of the process and work involved.

So, I was surprised and have been troubled by the process and purpose as it is currently being pursued for the Parks for All CAC, as its works seems exceptionally limited and mostly window dressing to check the box for citizen participation. It seems to me that this CAC process was developed to follow a script that seems almost certain to result in an approval of a staff-driven plan.

I also made the assumption that I was selected for the CAC because of my deep experience in conservation and protection of natural areas with a belief that this experience was part of what was desired by those wanting a CAC to look at the issues of the Minneapolis Park system. My experience includes being the founding president of the Minnesota Land Trust, the longest-serving board member (and vice chair) of the National Audubon Society, the president since 1986 of the Belwin Conservancy in Afton and growing it from a single nature center for St. Paul Public Schools with 225 acres to a complex organization with seven major program initiatives on 1,500 acres serving almost 200,000 people a year, a board member and the board chair of Island Conservation that is the world leader in invasive mammal eradication efforts on islands to protect endangered species, serving for 23 years on the board of the Land Trust Alliance, serving as an initial co-chair of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, building and leading the coalition that developed and passed the Legacy Amendment that will raise over 25 years some \$7.5B (for habitat protection, clean water, parks and cultural heritage) and serving on the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council since its inception recommending over \$1.2B since 2008 (including 5 years as chair). It seemed reasonable to assume that the people selecting CAC members thought I could bring something to the table in the area of conservation.

But I have yet to see and don't feel there is any path for that expertise to be of value to the existing process. I see almost no consideration of conservation issues in the current process and therefore wonder if it is any type of priority for the system.

I would also assume that others on the CAC come to the process with their own expertise and experience that could make the final plan something better than a plan without the CAC's input. But the current process does not seem to allow the CAC members to bring much value to the final plan, and I suspect will leave members wondering why they spent the time they did on the effort.

I joined the CAC assuming I would actively participate in the real work of creating a comprehensive plan, including setting our agenda and timeline, establishing priorities and forming work groups, listening to citizens, and consulting with experts. Instead, Park Board staff strictly control all of these functions and seem to make every decision, with virtually no input from CAC members. It seems completely unreasonable to expect that any significant productive work on a task as large as a comprehensive plan for the park system can be done by a committee that is scheduled to meet just five times.

This work is too important to be completely staff-driven at the exclusion of meaningful CAC (or other) input and shared decision making. The Parks for All Comprehensive Plan will set priorities and guide all Park Board activities for a decade, and if you really want a CAC to be helpful in this process, it should use the members to shape this plan. Yet it's clear that the Park Board staff intends to control the process, write the plan and present their plan to the CAC for approval, with few (if any) opportunities for substantive input or changes. While I recognize that MPRB must manage and allocate staff resources efficiently to deliver a draft plan in a timely manner, the extreme extent to which the process is pre-determined and controlled precludes any real or meaningful participation by CAC members. With such complete staff control of the process, the end result will almost certainly primarily reflect staff thinking and priorities.

There are a few specific areas where I think the CAC should be more engaged and involved in decisions.

- 1) Setting our timeline and meeting agendas. Meaningful work by the CAC cannot be accomplished in .. five meetings. In fact, staff's plan for only five CAC meetings reflects a CAC role that is too limited and circumscribed to be effective. The current plan/format minimizes our input and work so much as to discourage meaningful contribution. Agendas are set by staff with no opportunity for CAC members to weigh in on the agenda or change the pre-determined plans. If that is all there is to the CAC process, you

would be better off to kill it off and just let the staff run the process - it would save everyone-your staff and the CAC members-time and effort.

- 2) Identifying our key priorities and establishing work groups. Topic areas, where much of the work will be done, were decided by staff and presented as final to the CAC. Excluding the CAC in discussing or deciding these topic areas ignores the expertise of CAC members in areas where they could lead and contribute.
- 3) Considering the environment. Given the current and foreseeable climate emergency and its impacts as well as the challenges of invasive species and a growing population putting additional pressure on natural areas, I would expect significant consideration of environmental issues as an overall priority topic area-similar to equity-in setting the context for the goals and expectations in the Comp Plan. I have yet to hear any serious exploration of environmental issues in the CAC meetings, and these discussions cannot be delegated solely to a work group on climate resilience.
- 4) Facilitating meetings. MPRB planners facilitate meetings, meaning their focus is on getting through their agenda rather than on group process or contributions. An outside facilitator, working directly with the CAC to develop an agenda and process, would provide an additional skill set in optimizing CAC members' participation and contributions. Post-it notes and table work might have a place in our work but should not replace in-depth discussions about complex issues. Neither should staff presentations dominate the meetings, leaving insufficient time for CAC input and discussion.
- 5) Listening to citizens. Beyond the survey results and data, CAC members need to hear from citizens live and in person. Public input at meetings should not be an afterthought or add-on agenda item. The current formula does not allow meaningful community engagement. Sufficient time should be included (and promoted) for people to speak and to converse with CAC members, rather than 90-second one-way presentations with no discussion or real-time consideration by CAC members. More time should be allocated for public comment, and staff should not preclude two-way communication that could provide richer dialogue about issues of importance to citizens.

After the first meeting of the CAC, I sent Superintendent Bangoura an email asking for a chance to meet with him, understand more about his goals for the CAC and engage in discussion about the process generally. It is frustrating that there was no response to this request. But it does seem to send a message that the CAC is not a priority and just a checkmark in the Comp plan process.

I would like to know if there is an opportunity to consider a real process with trained facilitators not part of the internal planning process (who would be more objective than it is possible for someone from the inside to be). This would require more work from the CAC members but would provide a far more robust and relevant result. If there is such an opportunity, then I am ready for that discussion and work. If there is not, I would have to question why I or anyone else on the CAC would spend the time working on this effort.

I am sending this letter to you and hoping you can circulate it to the CAC members as the staff will not even provide me with contact information for the other members. I have been on more boards and committees, public and private, than most people and have never been told that I cannot have information on how to be in touch with other members. It would seem that this is just another way of keeping the staff run process in place and prevent a real dialog on the issues the CAC has been asked to address. I therefore would greatly appreciate it if you can ask your staff to share my letter with the other CAC members and hope you might respond as well.