



Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Cedar Lake & Lake of the Isles Regional Park Master Plan
Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Introductory Meeting Part. II

8/3/2020 5:00-7:00pm
Zoom Online Video Call

CAC Members Present: Win Rockwell (CAC Chair), Laura Kinkead, Ben Surma, Linda Mack, Nan Deher, Jim Romlin, Anna Eleria, Eric Gangl, Lilia Theisen, Drew McGovern, Aaron Shaffer, Michaela A. West, Alice Lehman, Adam Braun

CAC Members Absent: Agleska Cohen-Recountre

MPRB Staff Present: Emma Pachuta (Project Manager), Adam Arvidson, Dan Elias, Madeline Hudek and Alyssa Gilmore

Public Attendance: Approximately 5-10 members of the public present throughout the meeting

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The meeting was started around 5:04pm. Emma Pachuta (Project Manager) started off introductions by recognizing that up until this point the Cedar Lake & Lake of the Isles Regional Park Master planning process has informally been on hold because of the challenges posed by 2020. Emma explained that the main goal of the meeting was to think intentionally about how to move forward, identifying strategies to promote an equitable process that includes all voices. This may feel more challenging than usual because of the additional trauma and stress on many communities during this time.

The mic was passed over to Win Rockwell (CAC Chair) to say a few words of welcome. Win again emphasized that the meeting is an opportunity to talk about whether and how the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) would proceed in the face of all the challenges 2020 has posed. Win expressed his gratitude for the ability to have these conversations together.

Land Acknowledgement

Emma gave a Land Acknowledgement statement, saying that the MPRB is working to identify ways to honor and incorporate the voices of Indigenous people in our internal systems and all public-facing work. This is an on-going process, as a project team still thinking about how to continue to honor Indigenous voices. Emma expressed that she welcomes feedback and critiques on strategies moving forward. It is important to continue to do the work, recognizing how systemic injustices and inherent privilege have exacerbated challenges we face as a city. The majority of folks who are seeking sanctuary in the park system are Native folks, which is a result of not adequately addressing systemic inequities. Emma explained that she feels strongly that Indigenous voices and experiences are honored and elevated in this process, and that all CAC members and public participants remember and recognize that the park system sits on stolen land.

Meeting Agenda

Emma went over the meeting flow for the evening.

Staff Note: check the presentation, posted on the project page for a more in-depth look at the meeting flow, CAC group agreement & Online forum guidelines

CAC Group Agreement & Online Forum Guidelines

Emma read through the CAC Group Agreement list and the Online Forum Guidelines list, explaining that both of these lists are living documents that can continue to evolve as the process moves along.

Takeaways from Introductory Meeting Pt. I

The main takeaways, that were relevant to the second introductory meeting were:

- This process taking place during an unprecedented public health crisis; and what that process looks like moving forward
- How can it be ensured that Racial Equity is sufficiently built into the process, especially given the voices that are at the table.

Introductions and Ice Breaker

Project Staff assigned CAC members and members of the public into 4 breakout rooms that were each managed by a staff person. Staff asked participants to introduce themselves with their names, preferred pronouns, and asked them to answer the question: *In the next 10 years, what do you hope or anticipate will be the biggest change in parks?*

After 10 minutes in the breakout rooms, everyone came back to the main room.

RACIAL EQUITY

Racial Equity Overview

Alyssa Gilmore gave an overview of Racial Equity at the MPRB. They read the definition of Racial Equity at the MPRB, explained how Equity is different than Equality, how this affects the park system, what the MPRB's Racial Equity Action Plan Goals are, and how those goals are actualized through work at the MPRB. [Staff Note: see CAC Introductory Meeting 2 Presentation for more information about Racial Equity].

(Project Staff, *in chat*) For more information about the Racial Equity Action Plan and it's development:

https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/about_us/racial_equity/

<https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Racial-Equity-Action-Plan-Final-11-16-16.pdf>

Consultants and CAC Composition Goals

Emma talked about how Racial Equity has already been incorporated into the process so far. She explained that the consultant group that was hired (TENxTEN) was chosen in part because

of how they are thinking about bringing Racial Equity into this process. TENxTEN had several questions they are holding in their minds about the project related to access, programmatic function, and the history of the site.

Emma also outlined the CAC Composition Goals which were included in the Board adopted Community Engagement Plan for the project. These goals were held in mind by the CAC Selection Committee (made up of MPRB staff and community members) to ensure that a broad swath of voices was going to be at the table. Have diversity of ages represented, renter representation, a diversity of interests, geographic diversity, and a diversity of involvement in political processes. Racial diversity goals were not made, in regards to the demographics of our city. Recognize that there are substantial barriers to even submitting a CAC application (ex. time commitment for volunteer position). Also, these processes have not always felt like safe, inclusive spaces and it is important to continue to think about creating safe spaces in conversations moving forward.

CAC DISCUSSION

Project staff posed questions about how we frame Racial Equity and continue to ensure that it is involved in every step of the process. Is there anything missing from the list in terms of how Racial Equity shows up in Master Plans?

(Project Staff) Important to note that community engagement goes beyond CAC meetings. Although the CAC plays an important role in the engagement process, it is not the only thing that will determine what's in this master plan. All voices will be honored and upheld, including those from folks who aren't able to serve on the CAC. Continue to recognize that there are many people who cannot attend these meetings on zoom, in person, or otherwise. Hope that the thinking of the CAC and the decisions made by them will reflect those other voices.

(CAC) Offered a suggestion of a contact that he could provide Emma. Willing to investigate if there's a way to get access to community members through an organization he's part of. Amazed at how many people grew up in the site area, know that these park spaces exist, and still haven't visited the lakes. Would like to see more formal discussions about why people don't visit and how that can be fixed.

(Project Staff) Welcome that connection, and also recognize the challenges to engagements right now. Cognizant that people might not be able to engage with this project because of current realities, but won't know until we try to engage with people, can assess if it's working. Thinking through, and taking suggestions on, how/when to open the door on holding conversations about this project.

(CAC Chair) Seems like all the bullets on this list are about process. Need to identify specific steps that all people involved in the process can collectively settle on, that implement movement toward greater racial equity. Think that specific actions are missing.

(Project Staff) Asked CAC Chair to give an example of what that would look like to him.

(CAC Chair) Making additional ways of getting to the parks, providing greater access and more use, identifying specifically what those possibilities are and incorporating them.

(Project Staff) The Master Plan document itself will reflect these kinds of Racial Equity goals. Good to have an eye all the way on the end game, good to ensure that there isn't a lot of process without any results.

(CAC) Seem to be saying that we want to ensure an outcome that has racial equity embedded in it, not just the process but also the end result; want to set up actionable goals.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Project Staff, CAC Members, and members of the public split into 4 different breakout groups for 20 minutes to do an Activity called "List 5". Breakout rooms did a quick round of introductions, and then had a discussion on some reflection questions. *[Staff Note: The list of prompts and reflection questions is included in the CAC Introductory Meeting 2 Presentation]*

CAC DISCUSSION: NEXT STEPS

Emma quickly went over the original (pre-COVID) project timeline, highlighting that the project would have been in the vision and discovery phase at this point. Moving forward the project will still have the 18-24 months proposed for the development of the master plan, regardless of what is decided upon tonight.

Emma outlined three different options for moving forward with the project and stated that the next steps might look like a hybrid of these ideas. For each of the three options, Emma went through what this might look like and a couple pros and cons for each scenario. *[Staff note: The outlines and pros and cons list is available in the CAC Introductory Meeting 2 Presentation; additionally a Pros and Cons document that reflects the feedback received at this meeting is available on the Project Page]*

1. Proceed forward virtually through the end of the year
2. Proceed forward in-person
3. Formally put the project on hold if the CAC comes to consensus that they cannot move forward through either of the other two options

The CAC Chair took some time to speak to the project process; emphasizing that regardless of the route that is taken, the CAC will get an adequate amount of time to do the project well, and that the project will run its full 18-24 month course even if the project was put on hold for a year. With the project on hold there is little to no risk of interruption (won't start the process up only to find out that virtual engagement isn't working). Could explore meeting in person while the weather is still nice enough to do so, risk of interruption if it's not working. In order to even consider in person engagement would have to decide pretty much unanimously that the

entire CAC was comfortable meeting in person. Suggest that the CAC starts with the possibility to meeting in person, recognizing it may be a non-starter, then consider the other alternatives/variations.

(Project Staff) MPRB will provide the time needed to do this project right, don't have an artificial deadline for the project. The only caveat is that the project is funded by a grant through the Metropolitan Council (which is typically a 3-year grant), will have to request an extension. If the suggestion was made to put the project on a formal hold, Staff will respect this decision and would explain to the Board of Commissioners why that decision was made. Want to do the project right rather than quickly.

(CAC Chair) Does anyone want to speak to not wanting to meet in person?

(CAC) Reluctant to meet in person because of the health risks posed to me and the people I am responsible for caring for. Concerns about being able to hear at in person meetings while adhering to social distancing guidelines.

(CAC) Doesn't feel like there is a total yes or no at this point because there are so many unknowns. See the value in getting to know the other CAC members in person in real time. Also recognizes that there is a lot of information that can be conveyed over a virtual platform, it might be best to start there.

(CAC) Also sees value in meeting in person, perhaps not for a CAC meeting but something like a site tour, getting to know all the parts/reaches of the site. Expressed that to meet in person for things that can be done virtually is not worth the added risk.

(CAC) A CAC member who is new to the CAC process expressed that he doesn't feel like he's losing out by having the CAC meetings virtually instead of in person, is getting the information he needs out of the virtual space. Echoing that meeting in person for things that can be done virtually isn't worth the risk.

(CAC) Would potentially be willing to meet outdoors if it was necessary, agree that it should be held within the project site if that were the case. It feels more convenient to meet virtually at this time, there is a lot to gain by not having to worry about transportation or childcare, etc.

(CAC Alternate) Question about the idea of site visits for the scope of this project. Are site visits already planned for? Part of the process for this committee?

(CAC Chair) Normally there would be tours. He expressed that he felt like an in-person group tour is more risky than a stationary meeting outdoors. However, starting in March he and a couple of other CAC members and project staff began developing a set of walking tours to help CAC members familiarize themselves with the area. Came up with route maps, photos, etc. for people to do on their own schedule so that they are more equipped for conversations about the site. Won't give up on the idea of familiarizing selves with the project site.

(CAC) Asked if people saw value being physically around each other, could this be facilitated with some sort of shorter agenda that would allow them to come together, but maybe not to get work accomplished.

(Project Staff) Good question. The idea of a quick meetup feels more possible than trying to do an entire in person meeting. The logistics of an in-person meeting are challenging, have to think about lighting (projector), hearing, where people are space out. Challenging to have a meeting where people will come away with what they need to and be able to have fruitful discussions with one another.

(Project Staff) Facilitated a series of in person MPRB Staff meetings to gather feedback about the upcoming budget. Did in-person engagement because not all MPRB staff have access to MPRB provided computers and phones, so it was necessary to widen the opportunity to ALL staff. Limited to 8 participants with 2 staff (10-person gathering maximum). Even with this size group it was difficult to hear. Would want amplification outside for a CAC meeting, so we would need to consider the logistical challenge of sanitizing a microphone being passed around. It's probably POSSIBLE to do an in-person CAC meeting with a group of 25, but there's a lot more to think about conceptually.

(CAC Chair) Given the concerns, he suggested that it's not practical to start off the CAC meetings in-person. If the process starts with the virtual meetings, then we later find out that we have to suspend them until we can meet in person, that interrupts the project flow. The alternative is to agree to put the project on hold, where the CAC would remain in its current composition until the CAC is able to meet in person (with the understanding that while monitoring the developments of COVID, the project could be delayed for a year or more).

(Project Staff) There have been project precedents to halt the process and start it up again. If we start virtual, we don't have to assume that the project would have to be delayed or on hold before starting in person again. It may end up that we can organically pivot to holding some conversations in person.

(CAC) Very eager to continue having the online meetings so that the CAC can learn what they need to in order to start this process. Seems like the Zoom meetings are adequate at informing the CAC, and seems like everyone would appreciate being able to TRY to start these conversations in a new format. Would be helpful to know what the goals of the next few meetings would be, and what materials the CAC should be reviewing.

(CAC) Believes the current pandemic and the way we interact within the current environment will be around for a long time (maybe longer than a year), and that it is in the CAC's best interest to learn new ways to interact with one another. Think about creative ways to engage with community to ensure this process is as equitable as possible. There is a real momentum for change right now that people can get behind to make change, worry that will fizzle out over time.

(CAC) Shame to put the project on hold, would feel better to move forward to incorporate what can be learned. Question about what kinds of topics/issues would come up that would make the CAC feel like they can't move the project forward without meeting in person.

(Project Staff) Raised a couple of concerns about a digital format—How the public interacts with the CAC. As the CAC moves into the recommendation process, there is typically a much more naturally flow of conversation between community and CAC members about where recommendations will land. Haven't seen this work successfully in a digital meeting yet. Worry that the conversations could become lengthy and cumbersome on Zoom because of the logistics of getting everyone weighed in and voted. Less concerns about virtual meetings in the beginning, more so later on in the process. Can always continue to revisit the virtual meeting idea, and make sure it's sufficient and equitable.

(CAC) Seems like the CAC is going to run into the most trouble at the recommendation stage. But, there is also information that can be gathered ahead of the recommendation state that we could review. Some people feel like the potential delay between preliminary information and the in-person recommendation phase is not ideal. What do we lose by having a break in the process? If the most critical time to meet in-person is the recommendation phase, why don't we evaluate that later? We don't know where we're going to be in this pandemic by then.

(CAC Chair) Expressed that in his experience, if there is hiatus it works against the process.

(CAC) If the process going to take 18-24 months overall, why don't we have a kind of hybrid approach where we have a few additional meetings before we get to the recommendation phase. That way the process isn't dropped off completely, and we can take the additional time we need to have another informational meeting or two? Is that an option?

(Project Staff) If the project was going to move forward virtually, it would likely more forward more slowly naturally because when meetings are hosted on Zoom you just can't get through as much content as quickly. Want to be transparent about that; poses the additional question of if the CAC members would be okay with potentially having more meetings.

(Project Staff) In a normal process (pre-COVID), the early design concepts aren't released for about 9-12 months, then they are revised based on feedback from engagement events. So, even under normal circumstances, don't get to the recommendation phase for at least a year—it takes awhile to get through the necessary engagement and design before there's anything for people to weigh in on.

(CAC) Can see both sides of the coin. How is Racial Equity going to be built into the process and the plan? Don't feel like she has enough information about the community engagement process outside the CAC. Feel like the CAC can meet effectively in a virtual setting if the focus is on the

more informative elements. Question if the Project Staff can do a genuine thorough, comprehensive job in hearing the voices of all people that should be represented and served through this plan, given the current circumstances. Because of the lack of engagement this summer, missed an opportunity to engage with visitors to the park system.

(CAC Chair) Sounds like the best available approach is to NOT meet in person and that the process will start off virtually with informational briefings. The CAC will continue to work with Project Staff to evaluate how to continue to proceed as things continue to develop. Possibility, but not certainty, of interruption. Understand there may be a consensus eventually that the CAC cannot continue until it can meet in person. Seems like there is general agreement that the CAC should get started and continue to manage as it continues.

(Project Staff) Addressing the CAC Member's concerns about thoughtful, equitable engagement, we might have to wait until we can engage those communities in person if a virtual setting isn't adequate or available.

(CAC Chair) If the CAC has to suspend and wait, what will it wait for? Don't know now, and can't know now. Will have to be highly flexible.

PUBLIC COMMENT

(Public) Expressed his belief that the CAC cannot possibly get enough information via virtual tours of the site to adequately familiarize themselves with what the area is like and what its potential is. Spoke to the importance of this process, and the importance of Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles for people in Minneapolis that draws a diverse community and serves the entire region. Believes that the process should be put on hold until it can be done correctly with all the methodology needed.

(Public) Reiterate what was said about the site tours and how people see and experience these things in a meaningful way. Balance this fact with the comments about the efficiency and convenience of meeting online. There are advantages to have the privilege to engage in an online format. Challenge the CAC and MPRB staff to discuss what pieces of this process might be advantageous in a series of online meetings. Discuss where in the process there may be disconnect. Advantages of information sharing that could be done on the front end. Still keep in mind on site engagement.

(Public) A lot of park users are people that come from all over Minneapolis and even the surrounding areas to walk around Lake of the Isles. Have been seeing more and more people that want to utilize Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles. There's winter uses and summer uses. Have to do engagement with users in both seasons.

(Public) Expressed that if the CAC process started off virtually it would be easier for her to participate as a parent.

(Public) Expressed that the virtual format provided access to the meeting for her; wouldn't have participated if it wasn't virtual. It's a big effort to have access and a wide variety of people on the CAC. Need a wide variety of people to provide input, need to think about how people may be limited to engage in a virtual way.

THANKS AND NEXT STEPS

Emma told the CAC that the input collected from the CAC and public would be used to present a plan about moving forward. This plan will be reviewed by the CAC and they will have a chance to weigh in on the proposed plan. Expressed that project staff will have to be creative in thinking through what can be done virtually and what is better put on hold. Will be thinking of a plan for what this process might look like through the end of the year.

(CAC, *in chat*) Question about if he had misunderstood the tours. Heard that the CAC would have different guides that they could print off and walk around in person. Not virtual tours that are watched at home.

(CAC, *in chat*) It would be great to get those guides for CAC members to use (on their own) to visit all the sites before the snow

(Project Staff) Responding to the tours, they are meant to be tours that are done on site. Would be following a printing guide, not a digital 360° of the park. Would still allow folks to experience the site on their own.

(Public, *in chat*) In regards to "self-guided tour". He believes what will be lost in that experience is being together with others sharing their ideas about space, use and history. He thinks that some of that process needs to happen somehow as a committee together.

Emma closed out the meeting by expressing the hope that every CAC member would be able to go to the project site. She said that project staff would be incorporating the ideas that were heard tonight. Lots of questions to reflect on, lots of components to think about how to take action on. Emma provided folks with her contact information and thanked people for participating.

ADJOURN: 7:06pm