Hiawatha Golf Course Property Master Plan FAQ

First and foremost, this project will create a Master Plan. What is a Master Plan?

- A Master Plan is a document the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) uses to guide park development at individual parks or groups of parks.
- The process for creating a Master Plan is designed to thoughtfully engage all communities affected by park development and produce a thoroughly vetted, sound final product.
- Master planning helps uncover many unknown aspects of a park and builds a concept that reflects these discoveries and the desires of the community.
- Most Master Plans use an appointed Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to work with the design team and stakeholders and recommend a concept for approval by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners.
- The final product guides conceptual park uses, but it is not intended to be a final design. It’s a starting point.

Why is a new Master Plan for the Hiawatha Golf Course Property necessary and how does it relate to the Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan?

- Hiawatha Golf Course is a part of Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park.
- The Metropolitan Council requires all regional parks to have a current Master Plan to secure funding.
- The Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan was approved in March 2015.
- In September 2015 the MPRB received information regarding groundwater pumping at the golf course that required a re-evaluation of the long-term plan for the golf course property.
- The Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan may be amended to include the new Hiawatha Golf Course Property Master Plan.

Why is groundwater pumping at Hiawatha Golf Course an issue?

- The MPRB pumps about 242 million gallons of groundwater annually to keep Hiawatha Golf Course open as a playable 18-hole golf course.
- The MPRB’s permit for groundwater pumping, issued by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) in 2002, allows for up to 36.5 million gallons annually.
- Exceeding the limit of its permit by more than 200 million gallons puts the MPRB in violation of state law.
How did MPRB Commissioners address the groundwater pumping violation?

The Board of Commissioners voted to approve Resolution 2017-243 on August 9, 2017. The resolution directed MPRB staff to organize a process that:

- Evaluates future alternative uses for the Hiawatha Golf Course Property – which may still include golf in some form – based on community input.
- Recommends a Master Plan that accommodates changes to the Hiawatha Golf Course Property made necessary by a reduced groundwater pumping scenario.

The Board of Commissioners voted to amend Resolution 2017-243 on October 4, 2017.

- References to a “reduced groundwater pumping scenario” were deleted from the body of the resolution and direction to “address issues around excessive pumping identified by the MnDNR” was inserted.
- Recently a CAC member requested the Board of Commissioners modify the title of Resolution 2017-243 so that it aligns with the body of the amended resolution.
- MPRB staff will review the resolution and inconsistencies noted by the CAC member with the CAC, and, if necessary to resolve the concerns, request clarification from the Board of Commissioners.

What is the short-term plan for Hiawatha Golf Course?

Hiawatha Golf Course will continue to operate as an 18-hole course until a new Master Plan is adopted and any changes to the property are implemented.

What options are available to bring the MPRB into compliance with the MnDNR?

The MPRB intends to obtain a temporary permit from the MnDNR to allow pumping at current levels until the Master Plan is approved and any changes to the property begin implementation. After a two-year period of data collection and analysis, MPRB staff proposed two alternatives:

Apply for a permanent permit that allows pumping at the current level (Alternative A)

- Groundwater pumping continues at 242 million gallons per year and stormwater pumping continues at 66 million gallons per year.
- Nearby private properties continue to be protected from groundwater intrusion.
- The 18-hole golf course could remain open.
- Improvements to the golf course could occur, including upgrades to the storm sewer system, trash mitigation, and re-alignment of Minnehaha Creek.

Apply for a permanent permit that allows pumping at a reduced level (Alternative B)

- Groundwater pumping is reduced to 94 million gallons per year and stormwater pumping is eliminated.
- Nearby private properties continue to be protected from groundwater intrusion by reconfiguring groundwater pumping.
- The 18-hole golf course could no longer remain open due to a lack of dry land, so the CAC would recommend new uses for the property, including the consideration of golf in some form.
- Significantly better options are available for improved water quality treatment and site ecology.
**Why did Hiawatha Golf Course reopen earlier than Meadowbrook Golf Course?**

Two MPRB golf courses – Hiawatha and Meadowbrook – sustained significant damage due to the June 2014 flood. At Hiawatha, the Front Nine reopened in Fall 2014 and the entire course reopened in Spring 2016. At Meadowbrook, the entire course remained closed until all 18 holes reopened in Summer 2017. This was due to a variety of factors:

**Meadowbrook sustained greater flood damage and experienced setbacks unrelated to the flood**

The flood affected the two courses differently. Water receded relatively quickly at Hiawatha, while damage was more extensive at Meadowbrook, which created a more challenging restoration.

Meadowbrook also suffered number of setbacks not related to the flood:

- An emergency well closure required by the Minnesota Department of Health to seal off potentially contaminated water in a shallow aquifer.
- Clubhouse demolition after a major water line break.
- Roof repairs to the cart barn.

**Different course conditions and management strategies created different repair timelines**

Because the water receded quickly and the community wanted to course to open as soon as possible, Hiawatha groundskeepers began repairing the course as soon as waters receded enough to allow work on the course. Staff worked tirelessly to reopen the Front Nine before the 2014 season ended. As the water receded more slowly at Meadowbrook and the damage was more widespread, management took a different approach, choosing to repair the course completely before reopening.

**The groundwater pumping discovery at Hiawatha delayed long-term course investment**

After the groundwater pumping violation was discovered, MPRB staff did not feel it was prudent to make long-term investments at Hiawatha until the situation is resolved.

**Does groundwater pumping at Hiawatha Golf Course affect water issues near Lake Nokomis?**

There is no engineering study that points to a relationship between pumping at Hiawatha Golf Course and high water in the Lake Nokomis area.

**Given the number of water-related issues in the area, why aren’t we focusing on the entire Minnehaha Creek Watershed?**

A strong partnership exists between the MPRB, City of Minneapolis and Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, and each organization is committed to continuing work towards sustainable water management. It’s good practice to keep the whole watershed in mind during the upcoming master planning process, but this project is specifically focused on the Hiawatha Golf Course Property. The MPRB cannot issue plans for land or subjects it doesn’t hold authority over.