

Hiawatha Golf Course Pumping Assessment  
July 3, 2017 UPDATE

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and the City of Minneapolis (City) continue their assessment of pumping at Hiawatha Golf Course. While a range of options have been developed and considered, two alternatives that best address the project's objectives were selected for additional assessments including quantifying potential impacts screening for sustainability, and performing a benefit-cost analyses. Both alternatives would protect nearby private properties from groundwater intrusion which is one of the primary goals of the MPRB and the City, as well as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR), the agency with authority to regulate groundwater pumping.

- **Alternative A** perpetuates pumping of 242 million gallons of groundwater annually; continues pumping stormwater from the neighborhood west of the property (~66 million gallons per year); creates an open channel through the golf course to address stormwater issues and trash in the neighborhoods north of the property; and maintains the current 18-hole golf course.
- **Alternative B** reduces groundwater pumping 94 million gallons per year; eliminates pumping of stormwater; creates an open channel through the property to address stormwater issues and trash in the neighborhoods north of the property; realigns Minnehaha Creek; maximizes water quality treatment; and introduces new uses to the property.

At a public meeting June 21, 2017, MPRB and City staff summarized the Envision (sustainability screening tool) and AutoCase (benefit-cost tool) findings. The assessment demonstrates that Alternative B meets the objectives of the MPRB, the City and Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, reduces total pumping by 70 percent, maximizes water quality treatment, alleviates flooding in the watershed to the north of the property, and offers the potential of mitigating trash inflow to Lake Hiawatha.

From a long-term ecological perspective, a reduction of pumping is important to the MPRB. The golf course was constructed on a former wetland with organic (peat) soils that have historically settled at locations throughout the golf course. Parts of the golf course will continue to settle, and while the rate is likely less than when the golf course was originally constructed, the continued settlement of the land within the golf course area will result in the need for increased pumping into the future, especially if maintaining the area as a golf course. Continuing to pump at the current volumes presents impacts related to soil subsidence (or settling). By pumping less, the area of soil subsidence can be greatly reduced by maintaining higher groundwater levels throughout the golf course area, and the uses in the park and—ultimately the site design—can better accommodate future settlement.

The assessment also considered the potential for creating a 9-hole golf course on the property in a reduced pumping scenario. Trends and data, presented by the MPRB, suggest a 9-hole golf course is not financially viable and would be not supported by most golfers who typically prefer 18-hole courses.

A comparison of uses for each alternative was also presented. While this information continues to be refined, the number of users for Alternative A—when golf, winter use, and expanded use of the clubhouse are considered—are less than one-half to one-third the number of users when a wider range of recreation concepts are considered under Alternative B. In addition, when the potential use of the property is compared to the range of uses developed by participants at earlier meetings, Alternative B best captures the opportunity for developing a greater range of uses for diverse users. Alternative B also

presents the potential for a greater range of landscape types, habitats, and restorations, which promotes the ecologic integrity of the property. The most significant change would be the elimination of turf grasses to introduce, restore or enhance wetlands, upland areas, connected floodplains, and the creek.

Both alternatives present significant regulatory hurdles. A host of permits from several local, state, and federal agencies are necessary to implement both alternatives. Most significant is the procurement of an appropriation permit from the MnDNR that allows for the pumping of groundwater from the property. MPRB and City staff understand the preference of the MnDNR is Alternative B because of the significant reduction in pumping while protecting nearby private properties as well as the range of benefits related to ecologic function, flood reduction, and water quality that are possible. From a regulatory review perspective, and recognizing that no applications for permits has occurred, Alternative B is viewed as the more viable long-term water management option.

Considering the sustainability screening and benefit-cost analyses which consider quality of life, resource allocation, climate and risk and return of investment suggest Alternative B adds greater value to the public realm, offers more opportunities for use for diverse users, effectively manages water resources, and results in greater shared ecological resources. While each alternative demonstrates greater benefits than costs, the benefits of Alternative B are significantly greater than those of Alternative A.

A decision related to water management will follow three steps:

1. MPRB and City staff will present the water management evaluation to the Board of Commissioners at its meeting on July 12, 2017; no decision will be made at this meeting;
2. A committee of the full Board of Commissioners will review staff's water management recommendation at its July 19, 2017 meeting; and
3. The full Board of Commissioners will consider the committee's recommendation at its meeting on August 9, 2017.

Depending on the water management alternative selected by the Board of Commissioners, the path forward will vary. A summary of the path for that would be followed for each alternative includes:

Alternative A: MPRB staff will update and complete its appropriations permit application. Upon completion of the regulatory review and a favorable outcome related to the volume of groundwater pumping, golf course planning and design will commence.

Alternative B: The Board of Commissioners will convene a 9-12-month master planning process that includes an appointed Community Advisory Committee. Upon adoption of the master planning process, final design and engineering will proceed, as well as permitting and regulatory reviews.

Hiawatha Golf Course will remain open and maintained during either process until at least the end of the 2019 golf season. The MPRB will continue to work with the MnDNR during that time based on direction that allows for continued pumping during a period while the formal application for groundwater pumping is prepared.

The MPRB and the City continue to seek input that the Board of Commissioners can consider in July and August. While public input received to date will be shared with commissioners, there is an on-line survey that offers another opportunity for the public to provide input on the future for the Hiawatha Golf Course Area. Please see the survey at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/hiawatha-assessment>

To make sure information can be compiled for consideration by commissioners, please complete the survey by Sunday, July 9, 2017.