

## Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Parks for All 2021 Comprehensive Plan

### Virtual Park Summit—Office Hours with Abdimalik on Facebook Live

5/28/2020

4:00-5:00pm

**MPRB Staff Present:** Carrie Christensen, Madeline Hudek, Alyssa Gilmore, Siciid Ali

**Consultant:** Abdimalik, connected us with his Facebook audience via his Facebook page – estimated several hundred followers tuned in through Facebook Live.

#### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

Siciid Ali welcomed everyone, thanking people who joined the Zoom call and those who were watching via Facebook Live. Abdimalik then thanked everyone for joining the conversation and acknowledged the tragedy of George Floyd's death. He hoped that everyone watching was safe, and recognized that we are all fighting for justice. Abdimalik also gave a quick note in Somali to let his Facebook Live audience know that the conversation would take place in English that evening.

Siciid went over the agenda for the evening, where we are in the Parks for All project, why we were engaging with a broader audience via Facebook Live, how the Q&A would work, and next steps for the project following the Park Summit. Siciid also covered the ground rules for the meeting, and acknowledged that MPRB Staff were not going to be monitoring the Facebook comments, but that project staff would do their best to help loop the comments into the conversation.

#### **PROJECT Q&A**

MPRB Staff (Project Manager) answered questions asked by Abdimalik. She first thanked everyone who was tuning in both via Zoom and via Facebook, acknowledging that it was a tumultuous time in the city. She expressed that our hearts go out to everyone, and that it is an important time to take stock in our community. She also expressed gratitude for people carving out time to think about the future in the face of adversity. Staff quickly explained that the Comprehensive Plan is our big policy document that will guide our work for the next decade and that the process has been going on for over a year. Project staff have been working to bring in voices from the community, staff, and Commissioners.

#### **How is the MPRB different in programming from the City of Minneapolis?**

The MPRB is separate from the City of Minneapolis, which is unique for a park agency; for most cities parks are a department of the city. Right after the founding of Minneapolis in the 1800s the residents of Minneapolis voted for a separate Park Board. The MPRB owns its own land, is its own taxing authority, and has its own elected officials. Residents of Minneapolis vote in and elect the MPRB Commissioners, representing residents like any other local democratic institution. The Commissioners focus on parks and are separate from the City Council Members. The MPRB has a Superintendent (Al Bangora) while the City has a Mayor (Jacob Frey). MPRB has their own police force separate from the Minneapolis Police Department. The organization is still beholden to state and federal laws, accessibility, and other factors. Funding is a big factor. Property taxes help support parks in Minneapolis. Because of the MPRB's independence the organization has to create its own policies and policy direction in order to set the course of programs, activities, facilities, etc. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide this

policy direction. We are at a midpoint in creating this guiding document, and have received a lot of feedback from different organizations, staff, elected officials, and community members, who's ideas are starting to show up in draft policy ideas now.

MPRB Staff explained the CAC, Workgroups, and Forums that have been involved in the project thus far as well as the standing committees, and neighborhood organizations that have been engaged with. MPRB Staff explained the Youth Design Team's involvement in the project and shared her screen so that everyone could watch the Youth Design Team's policy idea video.

### **Regarding the parks, how does this policy benefit the East African Community in Minneapolis?**

When we look at Minneapolis and what we expect the next decade to look like, we're projecting a more diverse city, with more cultural and linguistic groups. Communities of color and indigenous communities are expected to continue growing over the next decade. For the Park Board this is a big consideration in our planning, the futures we are planning for, we are thinking about how we create parks that are welcoming for people of all backgrounds (ex. creating clear, multilingual signage), can we change the way we communicate in parks (ex. more graphic signage). There is policy direction around public health; as we expect our city to become more diverse we also expect more density which has the potential to increase public health risks and crises. We have to think about how we create services in our parks that support people across all cultures. It's our responsibility to create cultural relevant spaces and programming, and continually adapting to community needs.

The Park Summit is one way to engage with the project and provide feedback on what benefits people would like to see the park system provide. The office hours are a place to share what is significant and what is missing. Staff also mentioned the survey and comment board. One theme that has continued to emerge is community led programming. How does the MPRB as an agency do a good job of listening to what community wants in their parks (after school activities, meal programs, etc.), how can MPRB support what community wants, how can MPRB create channels to support ideas and find avenues to actualize them. How can MPRB do better at hiring people from the community they're serving. These are all things that are being discussed right now. By getting involved in these discussions it is an opportunity to ensure what you want to see in parks in the next decade happens. The Comprehensive Plan is tied to all Board Actions; which allows for things ranging from staffing to programming to funding proposals to occur. The Comprehensive Plan helps to hold the MPRB accountable and consistent, working within the organizations priorities and commitments.

### **Why are parks important and what benefit do they bring people?**

The City of Minneapolis is lucky because 97% of residents live within a 10 minute walk to a park. We are unique in that way where most people are able to interact with nature easily within the urban landscape. The large amount of greenspace the MPRB has also improves habitat connection; air, soil, and water quality, etc. This helps keep our population and our environment healthy. There are mental health benefits that come from greenspace and from the community connection that parks bring. There are public health benefits, emotion, mental, and spiritual wellness benefits. One lesson that's been learned from COVID is the importance of having space outside of our homes to recreate and be still in.

### **How long will this project be going on? How long will it be in effect?**

Goal is to have the new Comprehensive Plan in place by the end of 2020. The document will last for the ten years and will be implemented over the course of the decade.

**Questions related to budget and how the MPRB allocates money to support parks, how does the MPRB receive funding to have the parks?**

(MPRB Staff) parks are funded a couple of different ways. The largest amount of funding comes from property taxes paid by the residents of Minneapolis. There is also state funding in the form of local government aid. Some fees are collected for services like golf, parking in the regional parks, some programming. There are grants available from the state for the regional parks (for their operations like mowing and repairs and also to do improvement projects in parks). There is an agreement with the City of Minneapolis called NPP20 which is designed to help the neighborhood parks with maintenance and improvements; this money comes from bonding from the City of Minneapolis. This provides an additional \$10.5 million in funding to the parks, decided through the MPRB Board of Commissioners annual budgeting process. The public can weigh in on budget decision, and the MPRB adopts a new budget every year in December.

**Questions related to the Community Advisory Committee (CAC)**

The CAC is a group of community members that gets appointed by either Park Board Commissioners or a selection committee (made up of neighborhood/organization representatives and MPRB staff). The CAC advises project staff on the project process. Most master plan projects, and other large projects have an appointed CAC (current examples: Upper Harbor Terminal project in North Minneapolis; recreation center predesign in Cedar Riverside; Cedar-Isles Master Plan; Comprehensive Plan). These larger efforts have advisory committees that serve for the entire duration of a project in order to help connect community to the project and provide their input on the community's behalf. Serving on the CAC is a volunteer position, but it is made as accessible as possible (providing child care, translation, etc.)

Staff shared her screen again so that folks could watch the Community Advisory Committee policy idea video.

**What's next for engaging the community in this process?**

Following the Park Summit the Draft Comprehensive Plan will be developed, written and designed in mid-June/mid-July. The draft plan will be released for a 45-day public comment period, so people have additional opportunities to engage with the plan development. The plan will be revised based on the feedback received, then the plan will go to the Board of Commissioners for approval. More short term, upcoming there is more office hours scheduled with Spanish and Hmong speakers; there is also a Listening Session that will be a culminating event at the end of the Park Summit which will be streamed via the Parks for All Facebook Page.

*Staff Note: The Virtual Park Summit was postponed the day after this meeting took place in order to allow community to come together in whatever ways they needed following the death of George Floyd. This is the statement that was on the Virtual Park Summit Site: The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has postponed the Parks for All Virtual Park Summit. We hope you are safe, with your loved ones, and able to show up for community in whatever way feels right to you. We are outraged and grief-stricken about the death of George Floyd. We also know that racism and violence are systemic issues that we need to address, now and into the future. When the time is right, in coming weeks, we will reconvene the Park Summit to continue planning for the future of our park system. We will hold onto the realities of this past week, and the past several months, as we set the course of our policy direction*

for the next decade. We will keep the Park Summit website live for now and send an update with a revised Park Summit schedule.

*The Summit was scheduled to begin again the week of June 15<sup>th</sup>.*

### **THANKS AND NEXT STEPS**

Carrie Christensen thanked Abdimalik and everyone engaged via Facebook for joining in. Abdimalik closed out the meeting, thanking everyone again and wishing everyone a safe and sound evening.