

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Parks for All 2021 Comprehensive Plan

Virtual Park Summit—Community Listening Session

6/18/2020

4:00-5:00pm

MPRB Staff Present: Carrie Christensen, Madeline Hudek, Alyssa Gilmore, Emma Pachuta, RADIUS Guess, Michael Schroeder

CAC Present: Lolita Davis Carter

Public Present: 3 on Zoom and others on Facebook Live

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

MPRB Staff started by welcoming everyone and thanking people for joining the conversation; RADIUS Guess and Emma Pachuta, the moderators for the evening, introduced themselves. RADIUS gave a statement related to the death of Mr. George Floyd.

Staff Note, here is the statement that was read: In early June, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board postponed the Parks for All Virtual Park Summit. We were and 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. We hope you are safe, with your loved ones, and able to show up for community in whatever way feels right to you.

Initially planned to close on June 2nd, we are now closing the Park Summit tomorrow, on June 19th. The recent events have made it clear that there is great urgency for us to move forward in our work to untangle systemic racism from our systems. One of the key ways that we need to do that is by crafting new policies that address the root causes of those issues. As we reconvened the Park Summit to continue planning for the future of our park system, we have held onto the realities of these past weeks, and the past several months, as we set the course of our policy direction for the next decade. We are so glad you've chosen to join us.

MPRB Staff provided an overview of the Parks for All: 2021 Comprehensive Plan project and process, outlining where in the project timeline we are at. The Virtual Park Summit is meant to be the midpoint of the process, the goal is to collect feedback from the community on the policy ideas that have been developed thus far. Staff also gave a land acknowledgement statement and recognized that work around Native acknowledgement extends far beyond statements, and that there is more for MPRB to learn and more actions to take regarding this ongoing work. Staff reviewed the project timeline again and outlined the next steps. Following the Park Summit project staff will go into draft development, then the draft will be released for public comment, the plan will be revised following this feedback, and will hopefully be adopted by the Board of Commissioners by the end of the year.

MPRB Staff read aloud the questions that people are meant to respond to in this listening session. She pointed to both the survey and online comment board if people had additional feedback to provide following this evening. (Staff note, the Virtual Park Summit Survey is no longer available, the Online Comment Board is still available for REVIEW).

The four questions that were provided for the listening session were:

1. What feels exciting or most significant to you?
2. What connections or themes do you see across topics?
3. What are the differences or contradictions?
4. What are the gaps? What is missing?

MPRB Staff then went over the conversation ground rules for the evening meeting, as well as the online platform ground rules, reminding folks that the meeting was being held on Zoom, and that it was also being streamed live on Facebook.

Project Staff then introduced themselves.

PARK SUMMIT OVERVIEW

MPRB Staff (Project Manager) walked us through the Virtual Park Summit website (via screensharing), explaining that the Park Summit, which was initially planned to be a day long conference to convene around 150 people engaged in the project, was moved to a virtual format in order to honor social distancing. Staff walked through the landing page, how to contact Madeline Hudek with any issues accessing the materials, the schedule of events, and where to find the links to the survey and the comment board.

Staff then went through the 'What is Parks for All' section of the website, explaining how the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's independence necessitates the creation of it's own policy separate from the City of Minneapolis. The Comprehensive Plan, which is the policy umbrella for the organization, will determine the vision and priorities for the next decade of work; guiding staffing, funding, operations, etc. The Virtual Park Summit was on pause to accommodate people's safety and ability to engage during a period of civil unrest and uprising, but staff felt it was important to carry on with the Virtual Park Summit to make space to say that the organization has this really important container for long term policy creation. Carrie highlighted the project timeline again, covering where we have been and where the project is set to move to.

Staff explained that the Virtual Park Summit is meant to be tailored to people who are tuning in across all levels of engagement, but there have been quite a few people who have engaged with the process thus far. Estimate that we've engaged with close to 5,000 people; all the policy ideas have been developed by almost 15 different groups (topical forums, Workgroups, CAC, YDT, etc.) and over 150 people have helped to write the policy ideas. Staff emphasized that this is truly meant to be a participatory policy making process.

Staff also explained some of the framing of the Comprehensive Plan. One of the things that project staff acknowledged is that the Comprehensive Plan is meant to plan for the future (a decade out). Through deeper research and conversations with leadership, project staff outlined 8 futures that the Comprehensive Plan would likely have to respond to (*Staff Note: not all these futures are ones that we are trying to actualize, some futures were identified because we want to prevent/mitigate their impacts as much as possible*):

- A more diverse city
- A denser city
- A wetter city
- A more digitally connection, tech reliant population

- A sustained and increased wealth gap
- An older population
- Fewer wild plants and animals.
- Infrastructure that is aging

In addition to these 8 futures, there is an emerging 9th future around public health crises. During the policy idea development workshops participants were asked to hold these 8 futures in mind, and MPRB staff asked participants to also hold these futures in mind as they read through the policy ideas. Staff also mentioned that more information on the 8 futures, and some of the research that helped inform them are available in a slideshow embedded into the Virtual Park Summit Website. *(Staff note: this information is still available within the Virtual Park Summit Website Archive)*

Paused at this time to welcome new folks to the listening session, explained that Staff just shared out the Virtual Park Summit Website.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Staff moderator mentioned the four questions that folks could respond to, but based on the number of attendees opened up to a bit more of an organic discussion.

Project staff asked the CAC member in attendance if she would like to comment on anything, recognizing that she had attended various other office hour discussions.

(CAC Member) Nothing to comment on right now, just wanted to take the effort to attend all the meetings where possible, here to listen to the conversation, observe, be informed.

(MPRB Staff) The executive meeting got an update from Project Staff and were asked to weigh in on the topic of Enterprise. Have other discussions with the executive team planned.

Generally, he and the executive team are excited about looking forward toward the future of the park system. Excited that there have been around 5,000 people that have engaged with this project; speaks to the value that people hold in their parks. Reflective of so many futures and how people see themselves in it.

MPRB Staff then started sharing her screen again and shared the Youth Design Team (YDT) video. The Youth Design Team has been writing policy ideas for the past year (following staff workshops, their work with other youth, etc.) Can find their full list of YDT recommendations on the website *(staff note: these recommendations are still available on in the Virtual Park Summit Website Archive)*. Used this video as a starting off point because YDT doesn't go over all their policy ideas, highlight a couple of them.

After watching the YDT video to ground people in policy ideas, staff navigated back to the Virtual Park Summit landing page so that participants could start to make their way through the topical workgroup pages. Started with the "Additional Policy Ideas" section, starting with the **Athletics** Topic.

(MPRB Staff) Responding to recommendation about improving the overall quality of fields and diamonds. Yesterday (June 17th, 2020) Al Bangora (MPRB Superintendent) advocated for the North Commons project at the Governor's office. Al brought up the idea of going beyond providing these high-quality amenities, noting how powerful it will be for kids to be able to say that there is a space that they are really proud of when they bring people in for tournaments and games. Not only about the quality of the fields but also about the pride that youth feel in what they are able to share when they compete.

(Project Staff) This is a gap that could be better represented in the athletics recommendations: cultivating pride in our facilities and in our competitive circuits, teams being proud of where they come from and where they compete. Creating that sense of pride within the city, make sure people don't have to travel to the suburbs for better fields and facilities.

(MPRB Staff) Shared some big picture feedback that excited her; felt like there was a theme of better access and inclusivity threaded throughout these recommendations, glad that it was extended to providing access to amenities.

Next, folks looked at the **Communications and Branding** policy ideas in the "Additional Policy Ideas" tab

(MPRB Staff) Demographic realities of our city are shifting. Appreciate H17: Improve outreach to multilingual communities. Currently working on this, need to work on it more.

(MPRB Staff) Anything around adapting and evolving communications, streamlining/enhancing communications should be strengthened. Need to be able to be creative and stay up to date on creative ways to share information with community. Name this more strongly.

(Project Staff) There is some language about this in the Data Driven Decisions category about adapting to technology. Current social media policy doesn't allow the organization to utilize all the platforms available online. Evolving is an important part of technology, how to evolve policy around this.

(Project Staff) Could expand H20: Expand video and photography as tools for sharing our services and projects with public, to being about more than just video and photography as tools. There are many more tools to use to communicate services and projects (thinking about GIS tools like interactive maps)

(MPRB Staff) A gap is that the MPRB doesn't do much marketing. Most communications are reactive. Have a great brand to share, but have to be able to get it out there, would like to see more innovative uses of branding and communications (wraps on buses, additional branding for fleet, communication about park board owned land at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport, etc.) The Minneapolis park system is known worldwide but isn't promoted very well in community.

(Project Staff, *in chat*) Have heard people asking about providing a Minneapolis park guide, especially for people who aren't residents of Minneapolis. Help people learn about the system.

(MPRB Staff) How do we make sure that MPRB is sharing out the things that the organization is doing, and the things that are being done well. People don't know what the MPRB is doing/planning unless they are joining every meeting and reading every email. Should help people understand what resources MPRB has, what is being worked on, what organization is doing.

(Project Staff) Some mention of this in policy ideas, in communicating what is being done well both internally and externally

(MPRB Staff) Feels like the internal piece is strongly covered, missing a bit from the external side.

(Project Staff, *in chat*) Provided an example of one of the policy ideas that could be strengthened related to this topic (E10: Develop digital strategies for park-users around park

programs, services, and facilities that work for all ages, cultures, abilities, and technical aptitude.)

(Project Staff) This is something that has come up throughout the project process, heard from a young boy at a park even that the MPRB needs an app, a one stop shop for program information, trails, closures, etc. creating a unified way to connect.

(Project Staff, *in chat*) Another related thing, gap in sharing place-based history.

Moved on to **Data Driven Decision Making** topical forum policy ideas.

(Project Staff) Growing and have room to grow in data collection and decision making. Continue to keep up momentum and capacity for using and providing leadership with channels to data; analysts working with leadership. Thinking about how we can make sure that staff who are working with data are making the information accessible and available at the right time? Often the data is present, it's just a matter of working with someone to get it. These are the lessons that were learned from the executive team.

(MPRB Staff) Feel like there have been improvements with this with MPRB staff becoming more familiar with using VueWorks. Could turn aspects of VueWorks more outward. The Customer Service Department gets lots of calls about different amenities needing repairs, should be an alternative resource to streamline this kind of feedback. Also other kinds of technologies that can be used (ex. trash receptacles that can alert staff when they are full, prevent overflow; ex. lighting system not working). Technology should be used so that people can focus on enjoying the parks. Should be able to easily find information and navigate. Community should be able to do something like take a picture and click a couple of buttons to let us know when and where there are issues that arise in the park [turning aspects of VueWorks more externally]. Make it easy for MPRB staff to be responsive to the needs of the public. Would like to see the future system be much more responsive.

(MPRB Staff) Know that St. Paul has a click it, fix it style app where folks can report fallen trees or potholes or other issues, so other entities are doing this.

(MPRB Staff) Have to catch up and learn from other organizations

Next, went through **Environmental Education** Policy Ideas

(Project Staff) These policy ideas are related to creating an entry way into parks through schools and other partnerships, using them and gateways. Also thinks about how we can diversify the workforce so that it is more reflective and representative of community.

(Project Staff, *in chat*) Missing explicit language about providing full time employment opportunities for Environmental Education staff.

(MPRB Staff) Echoed that they had heard this feedback in other projects.

(Project Staff) One of the large themes that has been emerging is the idea of nature everywhere. In the master plans there are proposed areas for natural landscapes, but MPRB staff have a limited capacity to maintain these spaces. There isn't a specifically trained crew that is meant to take care of natural areas. However, there is a strong community ask for wild, natural spaces all across the city, how does the MPRB accomplish this? Hopefully through integration of environmental education into every park, teach people to value and maintain these spaces in their communities.

(Project Staff) Gap: conversation about creating steps to getting people into more wild areas. Create spaces that allow people to become gradually comfortable with being in wilderness by providing nature outings closer to home

Next, went through **Gender Inclusion** Policy ideas

(MPRB Staff) Should amplify the continuation of staff training (this is a theme that is across workgroups)

(MPRB Staff) Appreciate the inclusion of policy ideas about restroom facilities that are SAFE for all users. Saw this a lot at the Greener and Greater Conference in Colorado, especially around those experiencing homelessness.

(Project Staff) Anything they're doing in Denver parks that the MPRB isn't?

(MPRB Staff) The inclusion of additional social services in parks (ex. mobile laundromat, mobile showers, etc.)

(Project Staff) This is an important issue within our community, and a dynamic topic that our leadership is having conversations about right now (as recently as yesterday June 17th's Board meeting). There are a number of policy ideas related to homelessness in the Public Health section.

(MPRB Staff) RESPONDING TO H33: Provide restroom facilities that are safe and welcoming for all visitors regardless of age, ability, gender identity or expression, or religious and cultural identity. Have done work toward creating gender inclusive restroom facilities, have a lot of work to do around the religious part of this policy idea. We are aware of it, and recognize the opportunity we have to provide these facilities, but right now it's a gap because we haven't determined yet how to fill this need.

Next, looked at **Habitat, Ecology, and Natural Space** Policy ideas

(Project Staff) These policy ideas came out of a focus group with advocates, people who are working with natural areas, ecologists, activists, volunteers, etc.

(MPRB Staff) In our park system we have an approximately 55 mile ribbon of parkways that right now serve very little ecological function while simultaneously being located extremely close to our lakes and streams, which are then threatened by those parkways. Moving forward would like to continue to look at and think about how we evolve the parkway system to include and enhance ecological integrity and function. Need to move away from the perspective that one half of the park system is green and natural, and the parkways aren't. When we talk about completing the Grand Round we don't want to diminish that it will include an ecological perspective, it will provide habitat (making sure in the planning process that habitat and ecological function is re-created or enhanced). This is also dependent on partnerships with the City of Minneapolis, encouraging the relationship between organizations to be responsive to creating a next evolution of the parkway system that is DIFFERENT. Don't want to discourage the implementation of new parkways because it can create something better and more exciting, thinking about blending natural spaces, community activities, etc.

(Project Staff) So this is a gap within these recommendations; parkways and the need for innovative technology in thinking about ecological function of our streetscapes in partnership.

(Project Staff) There are connections to other workgroups that have developed policies related to complete the Grand Rounds but should explicitly mention it in this section as well.

(MPRB Staff) There is the opportunity to expand the boundaries of some parks through the Transportation Action Plan (City of Minneapolis). One of the goals of that plan is to link parks with more ecology and habitat. Public Works oriented toward expanding ways for people to interact with nature on streets. Wealth of resources already, can create an expansive natural network throughout the City by utilizing the parkways.

Pause to welcome a new participant from the public to the room, project staff asked her if she had any topics she wanted to share with Staff.

(Public) Related to the topic of land management, concern this year about safety at East Cedar Beach.

(Project Staff) Asked for clarifying context.

(Public) Because of COVID the neighborhood can't implement programming to improve community safety as they typically would, leads to guns and drugs in their area. Public Health and Public Safety issues. Only through volunteer efforts has the beach been maintained, cleaned, safe. Advocating for the beach to be closed to everyone after 7pm every day for the rest of the summer.

(MPRB Staff) Will carry these concerns to the Superintendent and Chief Ohtotto. Correct in pointing out that COVID has limited the ability to populate parks, East Cedar Beach has been a problem for a number of years, acknowledge that a lot of programming has been implemented by the neighborhood association to try and mitigate this. Appreciate neighbors are there to help clean up.

(Project Staff) Asked if the public participant would be willing to stay and respond to some of the policy ideas that have been shared related to public health and public safety.

(Public) Agreed to be involved in the conversation.

(Project Staff) Explained that the policy umbrella provided by the Comprehensive Plan can help support the community dynamics she brings up (related to volunteering, community models of safety, etc.). Thanked her for sharing her experience. Shared policies around Public Safety and Volunteering. Acknowledged that one gap in the volunteering policies is about informal volunteering efforts; MPRB should work on supporting and acknowledging the work that community is doing, would like to see that built into future thinking. Another gap is related to hours of operation of parks, hear about it in the policy ideas from an access issue vantage point, but doesn't focus on public safety. Lot of policy ideas around multigenerational parks; could strengthen language here about customizing hours of operation for sites based on their dynamics and the community needs.

(Public) Concern about the future of the relationship between MPRB Park Police and Minneapolis Police Department (MPD). Often feel like Park Police are in over their heads, have a lot of community relationships but when it gets bad at East Cedar Beach need the "real" police.

(MPRB Staff) Clarified that the MPRB Park Police are sworn, licensed police officers just like the MPD are, but that they have a different philosophy on policing. Recognize the difficulty of policing the park system, have a total of 34 sworn officers to cover all the park land. Trying to respond as best as possible.

(MPRB Staff) Is this something that typically happens?

(Public) It's a busy beach, can tell when it's going to get out of hand if there are enough people going to the beach. As soon as it gets dark you can count on things escalating quickly.

(Project Staff) MPRB is acknowledging that gun control is a huge issue in our communities and nation. Thinking about how the MPRB can have a role in these larger conversations. There are policies that relate to youth and youth programming as preventative measures against gun violence, but recognize that she's correct that we are in a uniquely challenging moment because we are unable to provide programming.

(Project Staff *in chat*) Provided G36 as an example [G36: Support initiatives of park adjacent communities to address crime while respecting surrounding communities and cultures.]

(Public) Haven't been able to do community programming of space this year and it shows. When families aren't present it doesn't take long before people come in with weapons and drugs.

(MPRB Staff) One thing that we are thinking about and that has come up through these discussions is what is the MPRB's role in responding to emergencies and crisis. Recognize that community groups aren't able to implement their initiatives as they typically would, how can the MPRB respond, fill gaps, etc.

(Project Staff) There is a policy directly related to Critical Incident Procedure development, standardization and formalization. Showed some other related policy ideas (increasing resources, providing broader staffing and supervision). East Cedar Beach is a good example because it is part of a regional park that doesn't have any staff present (outside of a police presence). This is something that has come up as well in these conversations, the fact that the regional system doesn't have as many eyes on the group (versus neighborhood parks that have recreation center staff and rec. directors)

(Project Staff) Gave example of policy idea G37: Activate parks to deter illegal activities. Could expand this policy to give focus on remote areas within the system. East Cedar Beach is called Hidden Beach for a reason, beach is further down, less walkable traffic when compared to neighborhood parks that have more passive eyes on them.

(MPRB Staff) Staff is thinking about this too within the context of COVID. Thinking about what activation could possibly look like during a pandemic or other public health crises.

(MPRB Staff) Working on developing creative responses to not being able to bring people together as they normally would. Focus right now is on kids (Rec Plus) as we move into the summer. Learning that we have needs for additional engagement. Learning from COVID how to do that and provide those kinds of services. One thing that we are missing from our system are programs for young adults (Ex. Night Owlz programs). Need to figure out how to replicate these programs with social distancing guidelines upheld. Not quite there yet.

(Project Staff) Question about G40: Measure park crimes/activities and publicly report website dashboard. Is this a policy idea that would provide a useful resource?

(Public) Not really helpful for their community because they are located adjacent to where the crimes/activities are taking place. They could potentially be a source for this information. Just because it isn't helpful to them doesn't mean it wouldn't be helpful for other neighboring communities/those who live outside those areas.

(Project Staff) Asked her if she'd be willing to talk about volunteering. Explained Park Stewardship agreements (formal ways to indicate and keep track of who is taking care of parts of the parks across the

system). Better at knowing these individuals/organizations/groups that have formally signed up through this process and communicating with them. Potential gap communicating with “informal” volunteers.

(Public) Would describe herself as an informal volunteer, mostly work with other families in the neighborhood. Do some graffiti removal (go to the fire department to get supplies). Not sure how the Kenwood Neighborhood Association is organized related to volunteering, know that there are some community members that might be in more official/formal roles.

(MPRB Staff) Sounds like her community has made a real effort to build strong connections with one another to care for their community, keep it safe. Thanked her for sharing.

(Public) Normally love the beach and the variety of folks that utilize it. Appreciate that sense of community that has been built. Frustration is that it isn't always working.

(Project Staff) Is there anything from an agency perspective that MPRB could do that would support the role of safety and community efforts?

(Public) Would like to see the beach closed in the evenings, and enforced, so that no one can go.

(Project Staff) The beach does officially close at 10pm. Difficult because there is so much unrest in the city currently.

(Public) That's part of it too, makes her uncomfortable, doesn't want to be a part of larger systemic injustices. Just feel like East Cedar Beach is unique because it is so hidden you can't even see it from the nearest road.

(MPRB Staff) Thanked her again for sharing her experience and for looking at the policy ideas that have been written around her concerns. Will make sure her concerns are brought back to leadership so they can continue their conversations around how the MPRB can better address safety concerns, especially within the context of the pandemic.

(Project Staff) Recognize that this summer is unique and requires special attention.

Acknowledge the large public crises Minneapolis is facing. One thing we have learned from these situations, that we need to continue to think about and that can have a place in the Comprehensive Plan, is this idea of how the agency can quickly adapt. What does the MPRB need to have in place for those quick and nimble moments?

(MPRB Staff) Opportunity to interface around current and immediate issues. This conversation tonight is really important. Would like to see policy ideas in Public Safety about continual opportunities for community to share concerns, interface with Park Police, Street Reach, etc. Out to have ongoing conversations so that we can be more proactive in our response to issues our community is facing.

(Public) Agrees. Even though she tries to do this via relationships with park police and recreation staff, has realized there isn't one person to contact or one location to be able to do this. Is there a place on the park board webpage, if there is where is the link? How can MPRB make it so that neighbors can more easily report.

(MPRB Staff) Get some feedback, but agrees it needs to be more easily accessible, need to find a way to navigate to get a continuous feedback loop.

(Public) Educate people about their districts, who their Commissioners are. It has to be easier, as easy as sending a text.

(Project Staff) Agree, have to create a community of people who are sharing ideas. Other places may have implemented ideas that can help. We need to facilitate learning among community members rather than relying on police presence. There are other solutions that we can work on

that are based more in learning and sharing between community members, 911 shouldn't be the only resource.

(Public) Really interested in that, creating a community of sharing across the city, would like to be able to take community safety into their own hands.

(MPRB Staff) Have seen this across the city; night patrols and such have been developed by communities that protect resources and ensure community safety.

(Project Staff) For providing feedback/information about crimes/activities/community lessons would it be interesting to have a map based program to attach comments to specific locations, or something more like a survey with a form?

(Public) Not sure what she would want it to look like exactly.

(Project Staff) Provided her with a link to the Cedar Isles Masterplan Project Feedback Map incase she would like to share her general thoughts there.

(Public *in chat*) Provided her contact information so that staff could loop back with her about the conversation this evening.

THANKS AND NEXT STEPS

MPRB staff went over the next steps: drafting the plan, which will then be released for public comment later in the summer. Following the comment period the draft plan will be revised and then brought to the board for adoption by the end of 2020.

Emma thanked everyone for joining the conversation on Zoom and for watching on Facebook Live.

ADJOURN: 6:03pm