

Como Regional Park Advisory Committee – Meeting Minutes
June 14, 2011

The group started with introductions again and welcomed the newest Parks and Recreation Commissioner, Dan Marckel. Dan will be the committee liaison to the Parks and Recreation Commission moving forward.

The committee agreed that sending out a draft of the minutes electronically and giving members a couple of days to respond with corrections/edits prior to posting on the website would be acceptable. Kathy will try to get minutes out within a week and will manage edits and web posting.

Meeting business:

Follow-up topics from the first meeting included:

- Demographic information about park visitors
- Permit parking
- Parking management strategies
- Como website

Demographic information:

- Using information from the Met Council, Como Friends surveys and the Leisure Vision survey conducted in 2007 as part of the Parks and Recreation Department's accreditation process, the following demographic statistics were presented to the group:
 - More than 3 million people visit Como Regional Park annually
 - Some 2.2 million people visit the Como Campus annually (zoo and conservatory grounds)
 - Of those who visit Como Campus, 16% reside in Saint Paul, 47% come from the rest of the Metro area, 22% come from outside the Metro area and 15% are visitors who reside outside of Minnesota. 1 in 3 reports being Asian, Native American, Black or Hispanic. 40% of Como Campus visitors report household incomes below the state median. 70% of Como Campus visitors ranked Como's free admission as "important" or "very important."
 - 90% of persons visiting Como Campus reported attending with one or more family members.
- Committee members noted the appeal of the amenities in the park, and particularly at the Como Campus as being far reaching...that a variety of communication strategies will need to be considered as a website and other materials are developed, especially related to how to get to the park and where things are once you reach the park.

Permit Parking:

- From the neighbor's perspective, it seems to be working. There are a few ticketed cars.
- From the perspective of people who work and volunteer in the park, they are hearing lots of negative comments from park visitors.
- Elizabeth (from Public Works) is willing to address individual issues residents have about the spacing of the permit parking signs. Anyone who has questions may e-mail Elizabeth at Elizabeth.Stiffler@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Parking Management Strategies:

- The Campus staff is trying temporary (sandwich board type) "Lot Full" signs when the parking lots are full. People still drive through when the signs are up – probably because they are temporary and not the permanent, electronic type.

- Committee members report that the banners are up on Hamline. They are perhaps a little too high up and are very busy. Maybe a more simple banner, placed lower (and not so many), with a consistent message that is somewhat authoritarian would be effective. Think about the theme of the banners.
- It will be important to pay more attention to signage on all sides of the park...sandwich boards or something on Lexington. Particularly on the south and east sides of the park, there is no signage to let you know where you are. It can be difficult to find the park amenity you are looking for if you don't know your way around from every direction.
- There is interest in re-opening the conversation with MN DOT about placing a sign at Snelling Avenue on both Highways 94 and 36. Jim (MN DOT) reports that MN DOT does control the number of signs on the roadways and that they can be costly if allowed to place one. Some committee members wonder if we can share sign space with the Fairgrounds.
- There was some discussion about changing the name of Horton to Como or something with Como in it, then Como would run through the park. This was one of the recommendations in the Transportation Plan. Elizabeth indicated that there is a process for moving this forward if the group is interested. In addition to work with homeowners, there may be right of way issues and it has to go through Council.
- There is a desire to add maps to the website, in addition to the ones that currently exist. Paul mentioned the Eastside Heritage kiosk. There is a small map of the immediate area, (inset map) with the "You are here" marking. There is also a larger map that marks a much broader area. It was suggested that the website should include both the smaller map, which provides detail of what is in the park, as well as a larger map, which would show the exact location of the Shuttle Lot in relation to the park. Jess will help us get this type of map up on our website.
- There is also a desire to give the Shuttle Lot an address, so that people can enter it into a mapping search. Steve (MN State Fair) doesn't think it has an address. Perhaps we could use Channel 23's address. Steve also emphasized that people may not know that the shuttle is FREE and that parking at the shuttle lot is FREE. He indicated that when talking to groups about the "Free Park 'n' Ride lots at the Fair, he makes sure to emphasize that it is FREE. There is a great new billboard at Snelling and 94 for ComoTown. It says Shuttle at Como Avenue exit, but it doesn't say "free."
- There are still concerns about the 'rule out' weekends for the shuttle. There are too many of them during the short summer season. If people think they are going to ride the shuttle and it is a weekend that it isn't operating, people will get frustrated and not want to take a chance that there is no shuttle on their next visit.

The Como Regional Park website:

- Meghan O'Hare, Parks employee, has done some work on what already exists on Saint Paul's website. She secured a new URL for Como at www.stpaul.gov/comopark.
- A number of pages were provided for committee members in a packet that will be used to provide Parks with feedback about what is already available on the website. Meghan intends to add some interesting photos and other visuals...update the current pages. She will be attending the meeting in July to follow-up with the group.
- The committee members are concerned that updating the website, adding pages and keeping it current will be a big job for one person. The City has some guidelines for web pages and the templates we are required to use already exist and will reduce some of the initial work. There are also other employees who can help as needed.

The Power Point used during the meeting will also be posted with the minutes.

Next meeting: Tuesday, July 12 at the Historic Como Streetcar Station 6:30-8pm