

**Como Regional Park Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes – September 9, 2014**

Members Present: Dan Marckel, Pete Bolstad, Kathy Korum, Art Oglesby, Tom Dapper
Guests: Don Siggelkow (Prom Management Group)

Introductions:

Today's guests and the members of the committee exchanged introductions with each other.

Discussion/Decision Items:

- **Como Golf Course – Summer Operations:** Don reported that Prom is pleased to be working in St. Paul. He reminded the committee that Prom has managed the five courses in Minneapolis and feel they are well set up to manage the St. Paul courses. Don highlighted a few key points during his time with us including:

--*Maintain what you have:* Don indicated that Prom put \$80,000 into the facility this year including upgrades to meet health codes. Prom would like to work on drainage areas and cart paths in 2015.

--*Diversify revenue streams:* Don indicated other courses have tried approaches such as foot golf and 15' holes. Food and beverage service is another way to diversify revenue streams.

--*Consider trends in golf and food/beverage service:* Golf does not appear to be attracting younger players. Prom is trying to find the sweet spot between golfer's needs and general public/neighborhood needs. Prom would like to attract people from the neighborhood for breakfast/lunch etc. Don indicated Prom is still trying to find a balance between concession and dining. Prom will be looking at the decisions made regarding the Como Pavilion and may base their plans on what happens with the Pavilion. Don indicated it will be nice to have a full season in 2015.

Don indicated that in his opinion golfers seemed happy with the condition of the course. Tom noted that there was limited winter kill and that the greens have been in good condition. The rough has been cut lower. Don and Tom indicated that the food service was well received. Prom is anticipating making a small profit this year which was not a goal for their organization. Prom was hopeful that they would be able to break even during the first year. Don reiterated that Prom is very happy to be a partner with the City of St. Paul.

Updates:

- **Como Centennial Garden Project:** Kathy provided handouts of this project to the committee as a follow-up to Michelle Furrer's (Como Campus Manager) presentation during the June meeting. Kathy reminded the committee that the project is being funded outside of transportation funding. The handouts indicated that the Circle Garden will be drop-off area for buses and other vehicles. Kathy indicated there are also some transportation improvements included with this project which are not funded by the recently awarded state bonding funds. Bids are open for the Centennial Garden. Regular updates regarding this project will be provided to the committee. The target completion dated for the Centennial Garden is next summer in anticipation of the anniversary of the Conservatory.
- **Como Transportation/Bonding Project:** The Parks Design and Construction Division has taken responsibility for this project. Division Manager Jody Martinez has indicated that this is a complicated agreement and hopes something will be in place by mid-October and that they will be ready for input from our committee at the January meeting.
- **Historic Pedestrian Bridge:** The formal announcement of the contract award is pending completion and execution of a contract. Trail work should begin this year and will be completed as early as December. Bridge restoration will probably not begin until next fall.
- **Como Lakeside Pavilion RFP:** The search for a vendor is underway and the City is excited about the future of the site. The City aims to have a qualified vendor in place by next year with the goals of

ensuring the vendor reflects the community's vision, takes full advantage of the location, manages the facility to the optimal potential and achieves top service and sales performance. The current vendor at the Como Lakeside will continue facilitating permits and managing the facility through the end of the year. The City will work with the new vendor to accommodate 2015 events that have already been booked at the facility.

Black Bear Crossings sued the City in November 2013, and the judge ruled in their favor on the breach of contract claim in May. The case between the City and Black Bear Crossings on the Lake was resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both parties and their counsel.

An RFP seeking a vendor was released on September 2. The competitive process is underway with a deadline for proposals of October 9 and a goal of having an agreement with a new vendor by the end of the year. An evaluation committee comprised primarily of community representatives, along with a few key City staff, will review and score the submitted proposals base upon criteria established in the RFP. The RFP was shaped based on more than 1000 responses collected from stakeholders through online surveys, in-person feedback and community meetings that took place this summer.

Kathy shared the observations assembled by BWBR (the firm retained by the City to facilitate the summer community meetings).

Other Business:

- **Como Signage:** Installation of the initial phase of the Como Signage Plan is complete. The e-parking lot signs are working as designed and the park staff is monitoring the 'real time' lot status to find peak usage patterns. Implementation of remaining parts of the signage plan, including kiosks with way finding maps, bike and pedestrian trail information, gateway arch and stone column signage will be added as funding allows. Michelle Furrer reported an increase in shuttle usage once the e-parking signs went live in July. The committee asked Kathy to follow-up with Michelle to see if the signs can be turned off when the park is closed. The lights (especially the green) are VERY bright at dusk. Also, the letters are a bit hard to read until close during the day...the letters are small. The committee also expressed interest in having Public Works (maybe Elizabeth can help) analyze the effectiveness of the e-parking signs after one year.
- **Route 83:** There was no response from Metro Transit in time for the meeting, but feedback from the group was very positive. This will be on the agenda again in January.
- **Met Council:** Dan provided statistics related to regional park usage for Como and other parks in St. Paul. One statistic of interest to the group (and not surprising) is that about 8 million people visit the regional parks in St. Paul annually – some 4.4 million of them visit Como Regional Park. An entire report may be accessed on the Met Council website at www.metcouncil.org.

Next Scheduled Meeting: The committee was informed that the next committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 13, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Korum/Pete Bolstad