

**ROSEVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES FOR  
December 1, 2020 6:30 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** Arneson, Baggenstoss, Brown, Carlson, Dahlstrom, Heikkila, Hoag, Kim, Lenhart, O'Brien, Stoner

**ABSENT:**

**STAFF:** Brokke, Christensen, M. Johnson

**1) INTRODUCTIONS**

Chair Hoag introduced the virtual Zoom format for the meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. State Law allows for an exception to in-person public meetings during pandemics to ensure the safety of commissioners, staff and the public. The public was still encouraged to participate in the meeting using the Zoom platform.

**2) ROLL CALL/PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Roll Call Commissioners:** Arneson, Baggenstoss, Brown, Carlson, Dahlstrom, Heikkila, Kim, Lenhart, O'Brien, Hoag, and Stoner.

Chair Hoag called for public comment by members of the audience. No one indicated a desire to speak.

**3) APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 5, 2020 MEETING**

Vice-Chair Dahlstrom moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Lenhart seconds.

**Roll Call**

**Ayes:** Arneson, Baggenstoss, Brown, Dahlstrom, Hoag, Lenhart, O'Brien and Stoner.

**Nays:** None.

**Abstain:** Heikkila.

**4) POCAHONTAS PARK NAME DISCUSSION**

Staff began with a review of the previous background that the Commission has completed on the Pocahontas Park name discussion, including:

- Reviewing the history of Pocahontas
- Utilization of the Government Alliance of Racial Equity (GARE) Racial Equity Toolkit as the framework to examine the issue
- Identifying and agreeing upon engaging the communities that are directly impacted by the name

- Utilizing the process as a potential opportunity to educate the Commission and community on Native Americans in Minnesota

As part of the process it was identified to reach out to members of the Dakota Tribe as the land would have been theirs historically.

Shannon Geshick, Executive Director of the MN Indian Affairs Council, founding member of the Roseville Indian Affairs Parent Committee, a consultant with the St. Paul School District Indian Education Program as well as a Roseville Resident was introduced to the Commission by staff. Ms. Geshick thanked staff for the introduction and also added that she is a mother, grandmother and a member of the Bois Forte Band from Northern Minnesota. She relayed that she was very appreciative of the outreach that the Commission has already done. In addition, she reiterated that the Dakota should be included in the discussion as Pocahontas Park would be on their ancestral land.

Geshick relayed that Pocahontas is not a villainous character. However, there is a concern of historical inaccuracies, as the victor has the advantage of telling the story. To address this there has been a push for updating stories with truth telling that would highlight multiple perspectives. In addition, she shared that a conquered people can sometimes be seen as “mythical people” instead of modern people. However, indigenous peoples are doctors, lawyers, etc. all living current lives. She explained that this could be a good opportunity to tell a shared story and bring indigenous peoples into modernity.

Commissioner Stoner asked if the name should honor an indigenous person.

Ms. Geshick relayed that she only speaks on behalf of herself, she acknowledged that she feels that reclaiming the name and honoring what it once was is a good idea. She stated that she did not know Roseville’s naming policy. However, she offered using the name of a Dakota person such as Lieutenant Governor, Peggy Flanagan. She also added the idea of “#landback” which would give the land back to the Dakota people.

Chair Hoag questioned if the name needed to be changed if an educational component was added at the park.

Ms. Geshick responded that she does not find the name Pocahontas personally offensive. However, she noted that there is a thriving Native American community/culture and history in MN that could be reflected in the name and this could potentially be a good opportunity for this teaching.

Commissioner Dahlstrom asked Ms. Geshick how you give historical significance to a place without losing the education of modern indigenous people.

Ms. Geshick responded that there are multiple avenues to historical knowledge. However, an acknowledgement that indigenous people are still here is important with projects

Commissioner Baggenstoss added that indigenous people are not only modern but are a valuable piece of the world. He acknowledged that Roseville has the opportunity to do the right thing and get in front of the discussion as it pertains to the name Pocahontas.

Commissioner Arneson suggested having a QR reader at the park to connect park-goers with educational information about the native people who originally lived on the land.

Commissioner O'Brien noted that she has read much of the information put out by the Roseville Historical Society. However, she relayed that it generally all starts with Rose Township. She stated that she would like to read about the Dakota people who were here originally. She added that partnering with indigenous communities to provide educational experience at the park would be a great opportunity.

Ms. Geshick commended the Commission for the work they have done already. She said that any recommendations that she would have offered (include the native voice, contact native agencies, include the Dakota Tribe) have already been addressed by the Commission.

Staff asked Ms. Geshick what Parks and Recreation can do to further the narrative that indigenous people are still here as a modern people.

Ms. Geshick responded that the Commissioners has already discussed some great ideas such as: Using the QR code to connect to a website that has historical and current information, include tribal nation information, and highlight current indigenous people. She noted that Roseville could be a model for other cities.

Commissioner Heikkila recognized Youth Commissioner Andrew Kim who brought this topic to the Commission originally.

Former Mayor, John Kysylyczyn, provided a review of Roseville City Code 204 and 205 to the Commission. He relayed that it appears to him that much of the information in the Pocahontas Name Process falls under 205 and may fall under the Human Rights Inclusion and Engagement Commission (HRIEC). In addition, he noted that he does not believe that a Commission has the authority to engage other sovereign government bodies, discuss reparations or land donations. In addition, he noted that historical research would be done by the Roseville Historical Society.

Kysylyczyn noted that he does not have any evidence of historic settlements on the specific piece of land that Pocahontas Park sits on. He acknowledged that per the Roseville Park Naming Policy parks

are only named after fallen Roseville officers. Kysylyczyn brought up different examples of parks that would need to be revisited if the park naming policy is no longer followed and parks are named after people other than fallen Roseville officers. He noted that there is a specific naming policy and he feels that the Parks Commission is obligated to follow that. Finally, he cautioned the Commission that he feels members of the City Council may not appreciate the Commission engaging other sovereign governments without approval.

K. Vandre, Thanked Ms. Geshik for being at the meeting. She relayed that she lives in the Pocahontas park neighborhood and she does not feel comfortable using the name of the park. She relayed her appreciation to the Commission for taking up the issue. Also, she pointed out that if we are worried about policies, Pocahontas was a real person. Therefore, if we are worried about having parks named after people, and following policies, the park name should be changed. She also relayed that the HRIEC should be involved in this process. In addition, she felt that the public should be allowed to have a voice. She concluded by stating that the people whose land was taken should especially have a voice in the discussion and not including them would be wrong.

Commissioner O'Brien reconfirmed that the Commission is thinking about a strategy that would be proposed to the City Council and is currently in the information gathering stage. Staff confirmed that is where the Commission is at with gathering information to present at a joint meeting with the City Council in early 2021.

Commissioner Baggenstoss added that there is nothing wrong with bringing new voices to the table and asking questions. He added that if in the end, the worst thing to come out of all of this is that more people believe in government, the Commission is on the right track.

The Commission discussed next steps in the process, including reaching out to representatives of the Dakota Nation and the Roseville Historical Society. They also discussed meeting with the City Council and if any additional information was needed prior to that meeting.

Commissioner Stoner noted that he would like to potentially have this as a topic next month, if possible.

Staff clarified the process and reasoning for having a joint meeting with the City Council as a next step, as it will ensure clear communication, guidance and support for the renaming of Pocahontas Park to the Commission.

5) **ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION EDUCATION PRIMER**

Commissioner O'Brien suggested updating the reference to "pocket parks" on page 6 to the specific names of the parks (Midland Gardens Park and Unity Park).

6) **STAFF REPORT**

a) **NEW OR RELEVANT COMMUNICATIONS AND UPDATE ITEMS**

- As part of the four week pause that started on November 20 all park buildings, facilities and in-person programs are closed until December 18. Parks, playgrounds and trails are still available for residents to use.
- Cedarholm Golf Course is still open and will remain open, weather permitting.
- Cross country ski trails will be groomed at Cedarholm and Acorn Park once the weather allows. Ski and snow shoe rentals will begin out of City Hall at that time as well.
- The outdoor neighborhood skating rinks are beginning to be flooded by maintenance staff. The determination has not yet been made on opening warming houses. Extra benches will be placed outdoors at the rinks.
- Virtual programs are still taking place during this pause time.
- Deer reduction letters have gone out to residents to notify them of the program with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The program will begin in the coming days with the USDA baiting and monitoring the sites.
- The winter/spring brochure will be included in the City Newsletter again. It is anticipated to be in houses around January 1, 2021.

7) **OTHER**

Commissioner Arneson asked how the snow and ski rentals will work with COVID-19. Staff responded that residents would call in and pay via credit card to confirm their rental. Once they arrive their rental order would be brought outside and placed there for them to pick up. Staff noted that this process is in the finalization stage and may have some updates prior to going live.

Commissioner O'Brien inquired if the Commission would be reviewing the Natural Resources Program in January. She added that it may be a good idea to invite the four volunteer leaders to the meeting.

Chair Hoag asked staff if Cedarholm has been open in December previously. Staff confirmed that it has.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Danielle Christensen, Department Assistant