

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners met in regular session with the following members present: Carter, McDonough, Ortega, Parker, Reinhardt, Rettman and Chair Bennett – 7. Absent: None. Also present were David Twa, County Manager, and Darwin Lookingbill, Director, Civil Division, County Attorney's Office.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA

Commissioner Rettman moved approval of the Agenda of the October 9, 2007 Board Meeting, seconded by Commissioner McDonough. Roll Call: Ayes – Rettman, Carter, McDonough, Ortega, Parker, Reinhardt, Bennett – 7. Nays – 0.

MINUTES

Commissioner Ortega moved approval of the Minutes of the October 2, 2007 Board Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Rettman. Roll Call: Ayes – Rettman, Carter, McDonough, Ortega, Parker, Reinhardt, Bennett – 7. Nays – 0.

PARKS AND RECREATION – Long Lake Regional Park – Access Agreements for Groundwater Monitoring Wells

Commissioner Rettman introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Roll Call: Ayes – Rettman, Carter, McDonough, Ortega, Parker, Reinhardt, Bennett – 7. Nays – 0. (2007-304)

WHEREAS, The City of New Brighton has requested access to install up to three (3) groundwater monitoring wells within Long Lake Regional Park; and

WHEREAS, Ashland, Inc. has requested access to install up to five (5) groundwater monitoring wells within Long Lake Regional Park; and

WHEREAS, The wells will be monitored in cooperation with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to determine if Long Lake, Rush Lake and other wetlands have been impacted by the former adjacent Northwest Refinery and Trio Solvent sites; and

WHEREAS, The County is desirous in cooperating with the groundwater investigation and remediation; and

WHEREAS, The presence of other monitoring wells within the park has not caused any programming or operational problems; Now, Therefore, Be It

RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners hereby approves an Access Agreement between the City of New Brighton and Ramsey County, which allows installation and monitoring of wells and requires abandoning wells and restoration of well sites; and Be It Further

RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners hereby approves an Access Agreement between Ashland, Inc. and Ramsey County, which allows installation and monitoring of wells and requires abandoning wells and restoration of well sites; and Be It Further

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RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners authorizes the Chair and Chief Clerk to execute the Access Agreements.

COMMUNITY HUMAN SERVICES/PROPERTY MANAGEMENT – Renewal of Lease for Community Human Services Mental Health Center at 1919 University Avenue for five-year period

Commissioner Rettman introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Roll Call: Ayes – Rettman, Carter, McDonough, Ortega, Parker, Reinhardt, Bennett – 7. Nays – 0. (2007-305)

WHEREAS, The Community Human Services Department has rented office space at 1919 University Avenue from University Center at 1919 L.L.P. for several years; and

WHEREAS, The current lease expires the end of October 2007; and

WHEREAS, Community Human Services and University Center at 1919 L.L.P. desire to continue their lease arrangement; Now, Therefore, Be It

RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners hereby approves the lease agreement for the Ramsey County Mental Health Center between Ramsey County and University Center at 1919, L.L.P., for approximately 28,579 square feet of office space at 1919 University Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104, for a five-year period from November 1, 2007 through October 31, 2012, for the Ramsey County Community Human Services Department, at the following rates:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Per Sq. Ft.</u>	<u>Monthly Rent</u>
Year 1:	\$16.00/RSF	\$38,105.33/mo.
Year 2:	\$16.40/RSF	\$39,057.97/mo.
Year 3:	\$16.80/RSF	\$40,010.36/mo.
Year 4:	\$17.20/RSF	\$40,963.23/mo.
Year 5:	\$17.60/RSF	\$41,915.87/mo.

and Be It Further

RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes the Chair and Chief Clerk to execute the final lease agreement, subject to prior approval by the County Attorney, Budgeting and Accounting, and Property Management.

BOARD OF RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS – Cancellation of Board Meetings

Commissioner McDonough introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption, seconded by Commissioner Parker. Roll Call: Ayes – Carter, McDonough, Ortega, Parker, Reinhardt, Bennett – 1. Nays – Rettman – 1. (2007-306)

WHEREAS, On Tuesday, December 4, 2007, the majority of Ramsey County Board members will be attending the Association of Minnesota Counties Annual Conference; and

WHEREAS, Tuesday, December 25, 2007 and Tuesday, January 1, 2008, are holidays and County offices will be closed; and

WHEREAS, The Ramsey County Home Rule Charter states that the Ramsey County Board must meet at least two times per month. Meetings are scheduled for December 11 and December 18, 2007; Now, Therefore, Be It

(Continued)

RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners hereby cancels the meetings of December 4 and December 25, 2007, and January 1, 2008.

**PARKS AND RECREATION – Tamarack Nature Center Destination for Discovery Master Plan**

Commissioner Parker said Ramsey County received several grants in 2005 to help with the planning for the Tamarack Nature Center Destination for Discovery Master Plan. The plan is exciting, and it moves this Nature Park to a place of regional interest, and it will attract people from far and wide.

Commissioner Reinhardt said the work at Tamarack Nature Center had been in the legislative package as a bonding request. She wanted to make certain that Parks and Recreation got credit for making sure that something could be implemented if the legislature provides Ramsey County with the funding.

Greg Mack, Director, Parks and Recreation, introduced individuals present today who had worked on the Master Plan: Jody Yungers, Director, Parks Operations; Marcie Oltman, Supervisor, Outdoor Education; Suzi Hudson, Executive Director, White Bear Center for the Arts, a partner through this process; and Bob Cuerden, board member for the White Bear Center for the Arts, who sat in on the process to see how art in nature integrates in this process.

The Master Plan is about transforming Tamarack Nature Center, which has been in business for a number of years. To move forward, they looked at collaborations and partnerships in providing destinations for people to get excited about so they would visit again and again.

The Tamarack Nature Center is in the northeast corner of Ramsey County in White Bear Township adjacent to White Bear Lake and Vadnais Heights. The Center is on 320 acres in the lower section of an 885-acre park. The Center can be entered off of Otter Lake Road.

Destination for Discovery is about discovering the value of nature through art play, exploration, and inquiry. It has been found that children are increasingly being disconnected from nature and the natural environment. Because children learn through active participation in their environment using the senses and movement, natural environment provides an in-exhaustive supply for stimulation, and there are all kinds of opportunities at the Center.

One inspiring part of this process has been the work of Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder (2004)*. This movement is spreading across the country. Staff believes Ramsey County is ahead of the curve on this, inspired by Mr. Louv's: "healing the broken bond between our young and nature is in everyone's self interest, not only because aesthetics or justice demands it, but also because our mental, physical and spiritual health depend on it." There is a lot of work being done nationally – the *Last Child in the Woods* theme being "no child left inside/indoors", talking about how to connect kids with nature, and kids and family with nature.

The mission of Tamarack Nature Center is to enrich people's lives by helping them discover the value of nature through art, play, exploration and inquiry. The documentation includes various vision statements for what would happen, but the recurring theme is to provide opportunities for exploration and discovery.

Themes and stories in the Plan are about Tamarack Nature Center being a positive element for early childhood development with progressive levels of challenge for children and their parents to participate in. There is a strong connection between art and nature. Tamarack has done a lot of joint programming with the White Bear Center for the Arts, which is seen as a partner in this discussion. They looked at how to reach out to people in the community who are not necessarily engaged in a traditional nature center activity. They have found a lot of common points and alliance between art and nature and have had huge success in a number of programs.

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The landscape is changing and that is a theme to be capitalized on. There had been a lot of surrounding farmland. The wood lots and old fields are dramatically changing and nature continues the process. That should be captured and explored, not only in the long-term changes, but the seasonal changes seen in Minnesota.

In rolling out the interpretative strategy, it is seen as various layers. They want to create the setting; engage visitors in learning activities; put visitors in optimum places to experience new perspectives about the natural world; highlight the moments when new perspectives are best revealed; and provide materials that allow for self-directed application. This is staging – not only the physical space but in the way it is programmed and in introducing people to the services.

Tamarack Nature Center has been part of the regional parks system acquired since the mid 1970s. The Nature Center started in a trailer in 1979/1980 and there has been a lot of success with the program.

When working on the Master Plan, there was a lot of discussion about the area around the current campus, which is about 60 acres of land. That is where most of the Destination sites are outlined in the Master Plan. Trail routing has been identified around the site for people to experience all the variety and diversity at the site.

For the campus on the 60 acres, almost 20 different Destination sites have been identified – the Nature Center itself, nature and play opportunities, a children's garden, observation towers, and a teal pond that can be explored via boardwalks. A future home has been identified for an arts center that could be on the campus, with White Bear Center for the Arts seen as a potential partner at that location.

There has been a highly successful early childhood family education program at the Center, in cooperation with the White Bear Lake School District. A nature school is hosted at Tamarack, and there is opportunity to expand that on a countywide basis.

One of the reasons for going to the state was to talk about building some indoor space and to bring the outdoors into the indoors. Identified in the Plan is a wildlife thicket to bring features into the building that would attract wildlife to the building itself, and to build points of observation. One rendering shows a lookout tree that would be a climbing device inside the building, which would offer different perspectives. There would also be more live animal exhibits and other things in the central core of the building.

A number of pieces would be incorporated in the area of nature play, one being water as a medium for learning and for play. That is one of the items included in the request for Legislative support. A request had been put in for \$1.5 million worth of projects; the Nature Play and the Children's Garden were principal elements.

A few sites have been visited in the process of preparing this Plan, including the Arboretum and the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago. Those sites had done an excellent job incorporating water, play and learning.

There is a small children's garden at the Center, the plan includes a larger expansion of the garden to engage children and families in growing food and food production.

The teal pond has some boardwalk opportunities to access other parts of the Nature Center; this would capitalize on what is seen as a great asset.

These destinations would be used for programs and would give people opportunities to visit on their own.

Making maple syrup is one of the Center's most popular events. There would be a multi-purpose building that would be more authentic than the garage used today.

The Master Plan shows the opportunity to expand the user base to reach out to a broader community. Staff believes there are opportunities to capitalize on people's refocus on nature. A number of foundations and funding agencies, one being the Conservation Fund, are soliciting a \$21

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million grant to address the nature deficit disorder with children. The Master Plan positions Ramsey County to do that.

The Wild Place is an existing feature at the Nature Center, and is a fenced-in area of about half an acre of oak woods. Children were invited to play with the natural things in that area; parents appreciate the barrier, which allows the children to play, discover and learn.

Ramsey County had received another grant of \$118,000 from the Institute for Museums Library Services (IMLS) to continue with the design/development documents for the various destinations identified in the Master Plan, to get more detailed than what was included in the report, and to lay out what it would cost to build them. IMLS is an agency of the federal government.

Commissioner McDonough said it has been identified that this would increase maintenance and operation costs and create more demand for community volunteers, with some associated costs there. When making this \$8 million investment, it would be helpful to get a sense of what the operational costs would be, which would likely be out of levy dollars.

Mr. Mack said part of the design/development phase would look at operational costs and fees that would be associated with this – it doesn't have to be all tax dollar supported. People are willing to pay some fees. All the places visited charge fees for services, but it is important not to put up barriers. A scholarship program is in place that allows for the elimination of barriers for people who could not otherwise participate. All that would be looked at in the design/development stage, and specifics would return to the County Board.

Commissioner Reinhardt said the action requested includes moving forward to get those answers, as well as to seek funds.

Mr. Mack said staff would be meeting with the White Bear Center for the Arts Board in November to talk about future relationships and how to move forward. This is an exciting opportunity. In all things the Parks and Recreation Department does, they are partnering more and more in trying to find those relationships to come together to create synergy.

Commissioner Reinhardt introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption, seconded by Commissioner Carter. Roll Call: Ayes – Rettman, Carter, McDonough, Ortega, Parker, Reinhardt, Bennett – 7. Nays – 0. (2007-307)

WHEREAS, Tamarack Nature Center is a 320-acre site located in Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park and has been Ramsey County's primary environmental education center since the early 1980s; and

WHEREAS, In 2005, Ramsey County secured grants from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to prepare a master plan to transform Tamarack Nature Center from a traditional nature center to a Destination for Discovery; and

WHEREAS, Based on the master plan, IMLS has awarded Ramsey County an additional grant of \$118,000 to prepare design development documents for key destinations identified in the master plan; Now, Therefore, Be It

RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners approves the Tamarack Nature Center Destination for Discovery Master Plan; and Be It Further

REOSLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners authorizes the Director of the Parks and Recreation Department to submit grant applications to public and private agencies to implement the capital improvements identified in the Destination for Discovery Master Plan; and Be It Further

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RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners authorizes the County Manager to approve and execute grant agreements; make necessary budget adjustments and authorize cash loans to implement the projects in anticipation of grant reimbursements.

#### BOARD CHAIR UPDATE

Chair Bennett reported:

- On a letter from Steven Lindstrom, Ramsey County's Veterans Service Officer, that with his continuing outside education, he is again certified for the year.
- He and Commissioner Ortega attended the Fitzgerald Theatre to accept an award on behalf of the County Board for the Landmark Center from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- He and Commissioner McDonough attended the Association of Minnesota Counties Board of Directors meeting.

#### OUTSIDE BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Commissioner Reinhardt reported:

- The Metro Counties Energy Task Force met, as well as the Legislative Committee. They are trying to stay on top of any emerging issues. Met Council is pursuing dealing with sludge from wastewater as an energy source.
- On the Minnesota Transportation Alliance hearing held in White Bear Lake, where she brought copies of Ramsey County's Needs on Transportation for Roads and Bridges and Transit. This was a well-attended meeting, where it was pointed out that people need to understand that the gas tax can only go for roads and bridges, not for transit or into the general fund.

Commissioner Carter reported:

- She was unable to attend the Historic Preservation event, but had she had been part of the conference during the week and learned a lot about historic preservation, not just of buildings, but the preservation of the history of communities.
- On a Joint Collaboratives meeting. The joint membership came together to address the issues, concerns and opportunities.
- The bulk of work done at the main Metro Counties Energy Task Force meeting was the beginning of a strategic planning process. They refocused on the mission for energy conservation, highlighting methods of communication and education across the metropolitan counties, and to serve as a catalyst for education across the State. As with the work on the wind project, the work in those areas would continue as counties opt to do so.
- The focus of the Capital City Partnership meeting this Thursday morning at 7:30 a.m. is on the Heading Home Minnesota and Heading Home Ramsey County Plan. This is an opportunity to engage a large number of business leaders on an overview and participation in making the accomplishment of the plan to end long-term homelessness for all the communities, if possible.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Bennett declared the meeting adjourned.

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Bonnie C. Jackelen, Chief Clerk – County Board