

Park Notes

A newsletter of the Friends of St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks
1621 Beechwood Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55116 651- 698-4543
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Sandy Martin receives Public Service Award

Sandy Martin, Shoreview Mayor and longtime community activist, received the Public Service award from the Friends at the June annual meeting. In receiving the award Martin joins an elite group of public officials who have used their elected or administrative position to preserve, protect and promote public parks. Among those awarded in the past are Former Congressman Bruce Vento and the Saint Paul Water utility. But most remarkable is the fact that three previous award winners have also been from Shoreview, Ady Wickstrom, Marsha Soucheray and former Mayor Dick Wedell.

“Shoreview has been a real leader in developing parks, bikeways and preserving of open space,” said Theresa Bradshaw, President of the Friends. “It is little wonder that elected officials from that community have been honored so often for their efforts.”

Among Martin’s contributions going back to 1975: helped formulate the policy of requiring developers to set aside land for public use; worked for development and improvements to McCullough Park; chaired the Design Review Committee of the Community Center; promoted development of the Super Rink in Blaine; negotiated with Wispark to have Rice Creek Fields and Trails developed where the four fast pitch soft ball fields are primarily used by women; and promoted development of more than 50 miles of trails in Shoreview.

Volunteer service awards

Volunteers make parks and recreation work. Each year the Friends recognize the contribution of a few of these hard working community members. 2001 Award winners are Pamela Carson, Karlyn Eckman, and Barbara Heideman.

Pamela Carson quietly works day after day picking up litter at the Ramsey County park at Lake Gervais. Once the lake freezes, Carson’s clean up efforts include the lake itself, gathering debris left behind by the winter sports activists. Carson helps teach neighborhood youth the conventions, safety and responsibilities inherent in sport fishing.

Karlyn Eckman has worked with her neighbors for five years to protect, acquire and promote the stewardship of the Kasota Pond green space and park

Arboretum developed in Roseville

areas in the St. Anthony Park neighborhood of St. Paul. She was the “organizer-for-life” of the annual Kasota pond clean up. This year twenty volunteers hauled out debris ranging from discarded construction materials, landscape timbers, tires and hubcaps. Eckman is both a doer and a writer. She has authored several environmental articles and was co-author and primary organizer of the 2000 DNR Metro Greenways Grant for the St. Anthony Park Natural Resources Inventory and Planning Initiative.

Barbara Heideman is a leader in promoting establishment of off leash recreation areas for dogs. She incorporated and organized Responsible Owners of Mannerly Pets, ROMP. She has helped mobilized public support for off leash areas and has rolled up her sleeves to help remove buckthorn and sumac in the Roseville City park system and helped spread woodchips on paths at Battle Creek.

An eight acre plot of open space has been transformed into a sea of flowers, trees and shrubs during the last three years. This project has clearly caught the imagination of the community. Contributions in time, talent and money have pushed the project along faster than anyone could have dreamed.

Roseville’s national award winning parks department showed why they seem so special to the rest of the country. Five years ago the city chose the site on Dale Street near County Road B and began developing the master plan. A volunteer advisory committee was recruited from among the avid gardeners. After the city prepared the site and installed utilities and pathways, the stage was set for the volunteers and the rest of the community to strut their stuff.

Currently in place are collections of lilacs, hosta, shrub roses and lilies. There is a shrub garden, Minnesota Prairie garden and a butterfly garden and pavilion. Soon there will be a tree nursery to start trees for use in other Roseville parks. Plans are in the works for a water feature.

The enthusiasm for the project is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the overwhelming financial support that has sprung, almost unexpectedly, from the community. The largest individual gift to date (\$50,000) was from Marion Short to honor the memory of her late husband, Roger. Dick Klaus contributed \$16,000 to build the pavilion in memory of his wife Shirlye, The Roseville Rotary Club donated 35 trees for Rotary Woods, the Central Park Foundation and the City each contributed \$50,000, Shell Oil Company awarded a beautification grant for the shrub garden, and the Friends of the Roseville Parks will fund most of the water feature. For citizens without \$50,000 to donate there are opportunities for more modest involvement, a “Celebration Walk” will be paved with engraved bricks which can be purchased for \$100 to \$200.

The arboretum is a work in progress sited just north of Hwy 36 on Dale street.

Wild parsnip the latest invader

Purple Loosestrife, Buckthorn and ...Parsnip? Yep. And this Eurasian weed not only is attacking prairie areas, it is attacking people. While you are safe in your bed, you may well regret coming in contact with this invader.

Wild Parsnip is a member of the carrot family. Like the carrot it has a deep tap root and the leaves are ferny and close to the ground. It grows easily from seed and waits until conditions are favorable to produce flowers followed by vast numbers of seeds. The yellow flowers are attractive and are similar to Queen Anne's Lace on flat flower stalks shaped like dill flowers. It is tolerant of almost all habitat conditions except shade.

It attacks native plants the way most invaders do, it crowds them out. It slowly invades an area in waves following an initial infestation. Once its population builds, the plant aggressively spreads. It invades and greatly changes a variety of open habitats making prevention important. Get it before there are millions of them. But that is where attack on humans comes in.

Wild parsnip juice can affect the skin's ability to tolerate sun exposure. In the presence of sunlight a rash or blister can form and the skin may be discolored for months. Always use gloves and wear long sleeves and long pants when attacking the invader.

The best control is early detection and eradication. Small infestations can be controlled by cutting the entire root of each plant just below ground level with a sharp shovel. All seeds must be removed from the site and disposed of by burning or at a landfill. As a precaution, do not put in a compost site.

Larger infestations require stronger actions. Consult the Friends' web site for more information. www.friendsoftheparks.org

Dickerman Park - Where did it go?

What happens when developers want a chunk of park land and NOBODY is watching? They get it. At least that is what happened to tiny Dickerman Park in Saint Paul's Midway area.

Where did it go? It went to parking lots and "play grounds" with fences and driveways for businesses. And, with just a little slight of hand the remaining remnant may become a YMCA. Goodbye park.

Dickerman park is a narrow patch of land on the north side of University Avenue between Aldine Street and Fairview Avenue. It was deeded to the city by Griggs, Cooper and Co. and Dickerman Investment Co. in 1909. The deed requires that it remain public parkland in perpetuity. Several dozen hundred year old oak trees still grace the "park" but few who drive University Avenue even notice. Despite their shabby treatment, the remaining oaks seem quite healthy. They are defying the odds. Many of them are surrounded by asphalt pavement, sometimes paved right up to the trunk. Others have a tiny buffer zone of gravel around the trunk with parking all around them. Since root compaction is deadly to oak trees, their survival is remarkable. How did this tiny park disappear?

Until the 1950's the park was maintained as passive green space without any physical alterations by the city nor encroachments by neighboring businesses.

Whack went a chunk of park.

All that changed in 1957. The City Council gave permission to build a parking lot to serve the Griggs-Midway Building. **Whack** went a chunk of park.

In 1979 the City allowed another parking lot, 10 slots for the YMCA. Some where along the way the Y erected a large sign in the park. **Whack** went a chunk of park.

In 1986 the building owner of 1731-45 University added a gravel extension to his parking lot between his two buildings. In 1987 the City told the building owner they needed permission to do this. The owner gave up on the idea of getting approval. The graveled area remains today. **Whack** went a chunk of park.

1987 was a busy year. The Marsden Building at 1717 University proposed a large sign announcing “American Security Corporation” which was housed there. The city attorney’s office indicated that appeared illegal and the permit for the sign was denied.

After that episode, working with neighborhood representatives and building owners, the Parks Design staff decided it was time to try to improve the park and developed a comprehensive landscape improvement plan for the entire park area. When the owner of the Griggs-Midway declined to participate the remaining owners abandoned the project.

In 1994 the YMCA won approval for a children’s play area. The city contributed to the cost of the project. While a playground certainly has a place in a park, this playground had no connection to the green space around it and the fencing makes it appear to be part of the YMCA, certainly not part of the Saint Paul Park system. While still park land, psychologically, **whack**, there went a chunk of park.

Next came the Charter School, Designs for Learning Children’s play area in 1998. Although approved in concept by the city, neither the school nor the city signed a lease nor the Memorandum of Understanding. The playground was built. **Whack** went a chunk of park.

Such a deal. A playground for your students and you don’t need to even buy the land. Such a good deal that the Charter School proposed a basketball court in the ‘vacant lot’ (ie. park). The City denied the request.

Some green space remains. Some oaks still stand. The whole park still belongs to the city and the deed still says it must be parkland.

Some green space remains. Some oaks still stand. The whole park still belongs to the city and the deed still says it must be parkland. The city charter provides for a ‘no net loss of parkland’. But now the Midway YWCA wants to take another whack out of this little park. They want to build an addition onto their building. No matter that they sold land behind their building a few years ago rather than keeping it for future expansion. Hey, there is a park out there that some smooth talker might be able to talk the city out of. After all, that approach has been alive and well since 1957.

The University Avenue Corridor Study, adopted in 1990, and the Parks and Recreation Plan, adopted in 1996, both address the restoration and preservation issues concerning Dickerman Park. Those working to turn University Avenue from a concrete jungle into a more inviting and attractive shopping and working

Hang in there Oaks! Help may be on the way.

Leasing of parkland

If the lease is greater than five years and the property no longer would be for exclusive use of the public, the provisions of the charter would prevail and the lease would be considered a diversion or disposal of park land.

environment view Dickerman Park as a tremendous asset rather than just another nook to park a few more cars. The former Executive Director of the Hamline Midway Coalition (HCM), Cheryl Baughn, stated “Dickerman Park is the only public outdoor space that is truly accessible to Hamline Midway residents who live in [that area]... HCM [seeks] to protect and enhance this resource.”

Hang in there Oaks! Help may be on the way.

When someone opined that the wheels of government moved slowly knew where of she spoke. At least as far as trying to pass a new ordinance in Saint Paul to regulate leasing of lands and facilities. Forward momentum has been so glacial as to be difficult to perceive.

Leasing of park facilities is just the most recent version of the threat to move publicly funded and owned assets into private hands. A pivotal battle in Saint Paul came in 1986 when a private developer seemed poised to win the right to build high-rise housing in Crosby park. That land grab was turned back and those who fought that battle formed the Friends of the Parks. To prevent this scenario from playing out again and again the Friends successfully pushed for Charter changes at both the City and County to require that any sale of park land follow a formal procedure, the land had to be sold at fair market value and the money received needed to be spent for additional park land.

For a time the quiet transfer of park land to private developers came to a halt. It was no longer economically advantageous. Then someone dreamed up the long term lease as a way around that messy inconvenience of the City Charter (the city’s constitution) and fair market value.

The public spotlight focused on the issue when the City leased Valley Playground to the Boys and Girls Club for 30 years with renewal options for two successive renewal terms of 10 years (the math there is 50 years) for a grand total of \$1.00 per year. There was no public notice and parks staff and the School District which had previously used the playground were informed after the fact. The playground was essentially withdrawn from public use since only members of the Boys and Girls Club were allowed access.

Dickerman Park is now in the cross hairs of a leasing scheme. The YMCA wants to enter into a long term lease to expand their building.

Since the Valley Playground incident in 1998 the Friends have been working to pass an ordinance regarding park leasing that would provide added protections to the community. The proposed ordinance would provide that if the lease is greater than five years and the property no longer would be for exclusive use of the public, the provisions of the charter would prevail and the lease would be considered a diversion or disposal of park land.

The ordinance must be presented to the Park Commission where there will be a public hearing. The ordinance will then be referred to the City Council. Four

Bald Eagle park development

years have passed since the Friends began this latest effort to protect Saint Paul parks. Even now, its fate is unclear. If you would like a copy of the proposed ordinance, check our website or call the Friends at 651-698-4543. The ordinance is tentatively scheduled to be heard before the Park Commission on October 10.

The Metropolitan Council and State legislature have appropriated \$675,000 for continued development at Bald Eagle Lake Park. It will fund a new picnic shelter and restrooms. The design work is complete. The project is expected to be completed by October.

Soccer grants awarded

Ramsey County has awarded twenty grants to Ramsey County municipalities for purchase and construction of soccer fields. Grants for four fields were given to Mounds View, two fields in White Bear Township, two in Maplewood, three in Roseville, four in White Bear Lake and five in Saint Paul. The County is appropriating an additional \$500,000 in soccer field grants.

The largest project under discussion is at Sandy Lake, east of I-35E in Maplewood. The property is owned by the Water Utility and used for depositing lime. Ramsey County, the cities of St. Paul and Maplewood and the Water Utility are working to redevelop this area for approximately six new soccer fields. The property must be capped and the fill must be stable enough to support the soccer fields. There will most likely be a trail system to connect the neighborhood to the fields.

Grand Round public hearing set

The public hearing for the Grand Round Master Plan is tentatively set for October 10 at 6:30 pm in the auditorium of Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Parkway. Consult the June 2001 newsletter or the Friends website for background information on the Plan and the issues surrounding it.

Vento trail dedication October 4

Dedication of the Bruce Vento Trail and grove of trees planted in his honor will be Tuesday, October 4 at 1:00 pm. Watch for a flier inviting you to the event. If you have questions, contact Peggy at 651-698-4543.

**The Friends of Parks & Trails
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**CHANGE SERVICE
REQUESTED**