

Minneapolis Charter Commission Community Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 30, 2009 - 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Northeast Library
2200 Central Ave NE
Minneapolis MN 55418

Commissioners Present: Bernstein (Chair), Bujold, Connell, Ferrara, Kadwell, Lazarus, Lichty, Metge, Rubenstein, Stade, Street

Commissioners Excused: Clegg, Dolan, Jancik, Remme

Chair Bernstein called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., a quorum being present. He thanked the Northeast Public Library for allowing the Charter Commission to meet in their facility. He explained that the purpose of the community meeting was to accept public comment on the amendments to the Minneapolis City Charter as proposed by Council Members Ostrow, Remington, and Samuels. Speakers would be allowed approximately 2 minutes each and comments were taken in the following order:

- a) Creation of a City Administrator Position
- b) Elimination of the Board of Estimate and Taxation
- c) Elimination of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board.

Bernstein requested that anyone who wished to speak, sign in on the Sign-In Sheets available for each topic. He stated that he would first call on people to speak who had not spoken at a previous meeting before calling on those who had spoken at a previous meeting.

Council Member Paul Ostrow summarized the proposed amendments.

The City Administrator Proposal: This proposal will eliminate the current situation where all department heads have 14 bosses. The Council and the Mayor will continue to have the appointment power of all department heads. Once those appointments take place, however, all department heads will report to the City Administrator who will hold the department heads accountable to make sure the wishes of the people, expressed through the Council and Mayor, are satisfied. This will significantly strengthen the professional management and efficiency of city government.

Elimination of the Board of Estimate and Taxation: The proposal would transfer the responsibility of the Board of Estimate and Taxation to the City Council and Mayor. In every other city in Minnesota, this is the responsibility of the Council and Mayor. Setting the maximum property tax levy for the city is an incredibly important decision which should be made by the Mayor and City Council, and they should be held accountable for it.

Elimination of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board: The proposal provides that the current separate Park Board would be replaced with an advisory board of citizens to the Council and Mayor. The ultimate accountability for the parks would be with the Mayor and the City Council, putting both the budgeting and the programmatic responsibility in one

place. This will increase accountability, transparency, and effectiveness eliminating duplication and putting the savings back into the park system.

Creation of a City Administrator Position

- a) Jeanne Andre, 4601 Washburn Avenue South**, stated that she participated in the League of Women Voters (LWV) study on this issue in 2005 and 2006; however she was speaking on her own behalf. She displayed a chart of the city's governance structure that she had created for the LWV study. Minneapolis governance is a very convoluted structure. Many individuals interviewed for the study were surprised that the city was able to operate as well as it does given the structure. Former employees reported that it was very difficult to report to 14 bosses and that dysfunction made their jobs very difficult. This type of structure could not exist in private industry. She recommended that the Charter Commission consider placing the issue on the ballot.
- b) Cam Andre, 1806 McKinley Street Northeast**, stated that he had been a City Manager in Illinois and St. Louis Park, Deputy City Manager in Kansas City, and Assistant City Coordinator in Minneapolis. The ten years before he retired he was a chief administrator for the Metropolitan Transit Commission. These three issues are intertwined in a way because they are all aimed at the same purpose - providing a more efficient and effective government and ensuring that people can have involvement. He was working in St. Louis Park in the early stages of the development of their park system. They had an advisory board, and they worked very efficiently with the city council in developing a good park system. Kansas City has an excellent park & rec operation, and they have an advisory committee that reports to the city council. The net effect of a good government is coordination.
- c) Michael Rainville, 89 7th Avenue Northeast**, stated that he did not agree with the issues personally. He did, however, think that the citizens had the right to decide and asked that the Charter Commission place the items on the ballot.
- d) Lisa Goodman, City Council Member, Ward 7, 1227 Hennepin Avenue**, stated that she was present representing herself. The Charter Commission is chosen by the Chief Judge of the Hennepin County District Court in order to keep the Commission non-political. There is no turf issue, and the job of the Charter Commission is to look out for what is best for the public. All three of the proposals are actually issues of governance. The question is not whether the Charter Commission supports them or not, but do they belong on the ballot or not. She believed that all three of the issues belonged on the ballot. The City Attorney, Lisa Needham, had provided the legal opinion that the Charter Commission has the authority to place the amendments to the Charter on the ballot by a simple majority vote. Part of the problem with government generally right now is that there are too many people protecting their turf and too few people standing up for the public in a very transparent way. Department heads should not be accountable to 13 bosses. She was a very strong supporter of the City Administrator proposal, although she might lose some power in that process. The same thing is true of the Board of Estimate and Taxation. There needs to be accountability for the maximum tax levy. And that accountability needs to be with the City Council and the Mayor. The public will then hold the Council and Mayor accountable. Most people have no idea who represents them on the Board of Estimate and Taxation which causes confusion. Constituents call the Council members upset about taxes, yet the

Council members do not serve on the Board of Estimate and Taxation. Regarding the independently elected Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, she didn't know that she had a solution to that issue, although she believed it was time to call the question. These issues and ideas have come up over and over again, and she did not understand the resistance to putting them on the ballot. In this way, both sides will have their voices heard, someone will win, and everyone will get over it and move on.

e) Tony Anastasia, 2519 Pierce Street Northeast, stated that he was in favor of all three proposed changes. He was appointed by the City Council to the Neighborhood Community Engagement Council and had a vested interest in making sure that all city departments are held accountable and effectively engage the community. He wanted the city to be more efficient; especially in these troubling financial times. Recently, he sat on the Grand Rounds Missing Link Park Board initiative and was the only person on the Citizens Advisory Committee to vote against the proposal that went forward. He voted against it because there was a viable alternative for \$25,000,000 less, but the Park Board told him not to worry about the money. The Park Board doesn't have to raise the money, so when a project doesn't get funded and doesn't happen, they blame the Mayor and City Council. Do people want an independent Park Board and Board of Estimate and Taxation, or do they want to have cops on the street?

f) Cindy Schulte, 2807 Polk Street Northeast, stated that she was the president of the Audubon Neighborhood Association for two years and continued as a volunteer on their Land Use and Housing Committees. Several years ago Mayor Rybak spoke of "Reweaving the Urban Fabric" as a priority. Her neighborhood set out to do their part in weaving the city together. Under the guidance of a CPED Planner, they developed the 29th Avenue Streetscape Plan, a neighborhood Master Plan, and a plan for Audubon Park. They followed the recommended community engagement steps and held multiple neighborhood meetings. They sought advice and built partnerships with their Council member, the Mayor's aide, Public Works, CPED, CLIC, City of Minneapolis Engineering, the Finance Department, the Park Board, Minneapolis Public Schools, Mn/DOT, Mississippi Watershed, the Minnesota DNR, and the Audubon Society. Their plans were approved by the community and adopted by the city, and they went to work on the next level of planning before implementation. That is where the city department turf battle began. In order to actually get programs done, all those various departments and agencies have to work together. It appears they only work towards their own self-interest, and not with a holistic approach toward improving the city at large. Jurisdictions overlap and compete. Public Works has different requirements than the Park Board. Each bit of the city government is in its own silo. There is no one person in the city government who has the authority to even bring these various arms together to negotiate. To turn plans into projects requires coordinating authority. Someone is needed who can bring all the public resources together and get the budget under control. She asked that the Charter Commission put this amendment on the ballot.

g) Jeremy Wieland, 737 Van Buren Street Northeast, stated that he was in favor of all three amendments being placed on the ballot in November to allow the people of Minneapolis to make these decisions and settle the issue once and for all. Speaking exclusively to the City Administrator issue, he had lived for two years in the Phoenix metropolitan area. Phoenix has a city manager system. Everyone knew what everyone else was doing. It was smooth; it was simple. There were still the typical problems involved in working with a large bureaucracy, but it was a smoother experience than he has

experienced in Minneapolis. It's not that people in Minneapolis don't do excellent work, it's just that they receive 13 different messages. The City Administrator will handle the day-to-day operations and all the laws and policies will still emanate from the Mayor and City Council.

h) Craig Rapp, with the International City/County Management Association, stated that he had been a city manager, had worked for the Metropolitan Council, and had been president of the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities. He has worked on the Hiawatha Light Rail Project and has seen Minneapolis at its finest. As a city manager, he has seen the benefits of that form of government, and the City Administrator proposal is a great step forward. He realized that people were concerned that this might mean that citizens don't have a voice. The following cities have a city manager form of government: Dallas, population 1,200,000; Phoenix, population 1,300,000; San Antonio, population 1,400,000; Austin, population 750,000; San Jose, population 900,000; Charlotte; Las Vegas; Kansas City; Fort Worth; Virginia Beach; Cincinnati. There is a lot of talk today about transparency in government and citizen engagement. The city needs strong leadership and direction for the operations of the organization and that would be provided by a city administrator.

i) Mark Bernhardson, Bloomington resident, City Manager for the city of Bloomington, Minnesota, stated that he had worked for the city of Minneapolis as a research assistant in 1976 and was assigned to work with the study commission of the City Coordinator's office. Many good ideas were brought forward. Unfortunately since that time, little improvement has been made to the overall city structure of Minneapolis. It is a system that doesn't allow people to really shine. It is not transparent or accountable. No one has chosen to emulate Minneapolis' form of governance anywhere else in the country. The city administrator form of government will move the city much closer to what is traditional organizational governance.

j) Clark Arneson, 10809 Town Square Drive Northeast, Blaine, City Manager for the City of Blaine and also a member of and speaking on behalf of the National City-County Association, stated that as a city manager, he was the equivalent of a chief executive officer for the city of Blaine with the council and mayor serving as a seven member board of directors. He was an at-will employee. One of the first things that they work on every year is annual goal setting. His responsibilities include preparing an annual budget, daily administration of that budget, setting the goals with the council, human relations, personnel matters, working on operational plans with the departments, policy development, and ultimately setting agendas to implement policies. The residents of Blaine do not hesitate to call their council member or the mayor, and the city manager gets the phone call after that. Then they go to work.

k) Cathy Abene, 4722 Bryant Avenue South, stated that she was a civil engineer and had also been a municipal employee. She had worked for the city of Seattle which had an executive mayor system. They were able to make decisions in a uniform and consistent way. There was equitable decision making without a lot of external or political pressures. Currently, she worked at the University of Minnesota as a civil engineer and dealt with a lot of engineering staff at the city. She heard quite often that they had 14 bosses. They couldn't come and speak for themselves, but she wanted to speak for them because she thought their job could be easier. They could be much more effective; they could deliver services in an equitable and fair manner if they could report up one chain of command.

I) Amy Fields, 820 2nd Avenue Northeast, stated that her primary reason for supporting the city manager position is to get accountability from department heads and their departments to the city manager and the city manager to the Council and the Council to the residents of the city. She had worked in the non-profit sector her entire profession and had seen powerful, dynamic, and persuasive managers run circles around boards, sometimes to the detriment of the organization. With the current structure, an influential, powerful department head could divide and conquer the council and pit one against the other. What incentive is there for a department head to make any kind of personnel or service standard changes? When will they ever be called to account by the entire council on behalf of the entire residency of the city? Right now, it is easy for city departments to ignore customer service and productivity issues. Having a city manager who is directed by the council and who in turn requires accountability from city staff, provides a structure in which every city resident can be assured of receiving excellent customer service from the people hired to serve the city. It is a model that has worked elsewhere. Why not here?

Elimination of the Board of Estimate and Taxation

a) Pat Scott, 2413 Russell Avenue South, stated that she had served as the 7th Ward City Council member from 1990 through 1997. Prior to that, she was on the Minneapolis School Board. She was opposed to the idea of doing away with the Board of Estimate and Taxation. The Board of Estimate and Taxation is one of the main ways that the Park Board is able to hold its place and be able to be sure that they are going to get decent levels of support from the city. The Board of Estimate and Taxation does three things: (1) It sets a maximum property tax levy. It does not establish the tax levies of the city. It sets a maximum amount over which the whole city cannot go. Most of the time, the levy doesn't ever equal that maximum amount because the actual levy is set by the Council. (2) The Board of Estimate and Taxation sells bonds for property and fiscal improvements in the city. That is an extremely important role, and if the Board of Estimate and Taxation is eliminated, the city will have to go to the legislature and ask permission to sell general obligation bonds. Cities of the first class do not have the power to sell general obligation bonds, but Minneapolis has that authority. Duluth and St. Paul do not. It is very important for the city to maintain that private independence. (3) The audit function of the Board of Estimate and Taxation is very important and must remain independent from the politicians in City Hall.

b) Jeanne Andre, 4601 Washburn Avenue South, stated that the Board of Estimate and Taxation should be eliminated. Other cities are able to sell bonds and do audits without this extra function. It added an extra layer that decreases transparency for citizens.

c) Jeremy Wieland, 737 Van Buren Street Northeast, stated that he would like to see this on the ballot in November. He was in favor of eliminating the Board of Estimate and Taxation and giving that authority to the City Council. It is really a transparency issue. Most people in Minneapolis don't know what the Board of Estimate and Taxation does, and most municipalities don't have one.

d) Craig Rapp, with the International City/County Management Association, stated that he was in favor of eliminating the Board of Estimate and Taxation because he felt that accountability and transparency would be enhanced. In most cities, the council sets the vision for the city, identifies projects, and moves forward on them. They fund them with debt which are bond issues. The Board of Estimate and Taxation certainly serves a function

here in Minneapolis to get those things done, but a City Administrator/City Manager form of government wouldn't have a set up like that.

e) DeWayne Townsend, 3222 39th Avenue South, stated that he was a long-time member of the Longfellow Community Council and was also running for the Board of Estimate and Taxation. He has found that people start out getting involved with their community through neighborhood organizations, but the independent boards are an excellent second step for people interested in political aspirations. Minneapolis has a reputation of having a very clean government and part of the reason has to do with the independent boards that keep an eye on one another. Transparency is dramatically increased by having citizen activists on these boards. Maintaining the independent boards is very important for Minneapolis.

Elimination of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board

a) Lynn Levitt, 3318 Polk Street Northeast, stated that she had lived in Minneapolis her entire life and also worked for Minneapolis 311 which is part of the planned accountability that was started four years ago so people had easier access to government services. She felt that these proposals were another step in the right direction because it is very difficult to find out who is responsible for something in the city. The times call for consolidation. She is asked to do more with less and willingly steps up. With one point of accountability people are actually heard better. These proposals should be placed on the ballot because everyone's opinion is valuable. Regarding the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, the fields at the Edison Athletic Field are in horrible condition. Cavell Park has old equipment in disrepair and the surface of the tennis court is poor. There is also a fancy art piece on the corner of Polk and the Parkway that is an ineffective use of money. The lights on St. Anthony Parkway between Johnson and Central have not worked for almost two years. The Park Board is not using their money well.

b) James Spencer, 2500 Madison Street Northeast, stated that he grew up playing sports northeast. He was poor but didn't know it because he had the Park Board. From the Park Board he received the skill it took to survive a 14 year military career. He had been to 25 countries and 40 states. There is nothing that compares to the Minneapolis Park Board. The Park Board uses only 8% of the property taxes that are collected; and it is the best 8%. He was also an employee of the Park Board because he thought he should give something back. The Park Board is world renowned and should continue as it is.

c) Thomas Lonergan, 3201 18th Avenue South, stated that he was a walker, bicyclist, and runner. When he moved to Minneapolis from Detroit, he was amazed at the park system. He was convinced that the park system is what it is because of the foresight of the people that founded Minneapolis to have an independent Park Board. There have been problems, but it is not really broke, and it doesn't need to be fixed. What the Park Board does need is a higher dose of public participation and he hoped to be involved with that in the future. This is a wonderful system. It would not be wise to put the Park Board system into the city bureaucracy. The good stuff would inevitably get whittled away because of the economic pressures that are going to continue in the years ahead. He was opposed to the proposal, and it was up to the Charter Commission whether to place it on the ballot.

d) Doug Schelski (sp?) 1815 Central Avenue Northeast, stated that he was a political science major. Minneapolis is one of the three worst places of city government there is. It needs a strong mayor. He was present to speak against the Charter change to eliminate the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. No one has supported the parks and the kids more than Walt Dziedzic. If someone has a problem, they can go to their Park Board Commissioners. If the Park Board is taken over the City Council, funds will be cut.

e) Joyce Pfaff, 1920 1st Street South, stated that she was a member of the Minneapolis Municipal Athletic Association although she was speaking on her own behalf. She supported herself through college working for the Park Board, and was in favor of keeping the independent Park Board. At one time, she had asked the Park Board to install tennis courts in Murphy Square at Augsburg College, and they refused. She was now grateful because it is preserved as a park as it should be. The Park Board has been an excellent organization for keeping the parks as they should be. They have done an excellent job of promoting parks in Minneapolis. She has travelled all over the world and has never seen a park system operated as well as it is in the city of Minneapolis.

f) Andrew Berton, 1701 Emerson Avenue South, stated that he was speaking personally and on behalf of the Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association (LHNA). Reading from the LHNA Board Minutes of March 10, 2009, "The Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association rejects the proposed amendment before the Minneapolis Charter Commission eliminating the Minneapolis Park Board". He felt the Park Board was superb. There have been problems within it, but as an organization it is something that can heal itself and be more responsive to the public. He truly believed it should be left independent.

g) Diane Moe, 4928 Park Avenue, stated that she had worked for Minneapolis for six years, went to work for one of the first ring suburbs, and then came back to work for Minneapolis four years ago. The Minneapolis Park Board is the envy of the nation. The park system is the best in the country. The only focus of the staff of the Minneapolis Park Board is the parks. In the suburb she had work, the parks were low on the list. Most suburbs don't have forestry departments; they have 18-20 year old kids pruning and taking down the trees. Minneapolis has a professional forestry staff. If the Park Board is eliminated, who will monitor the lake quality? The proposal states that maintenance will be taken over by Public Works and the Park Police taken over by the MPD. Who is going to organize the neighborhood festivals, youth and adult athletics, and all the other things that the park staff currently does? She has not heard of any financial advantages of eliminating the Park Board. There would be a huge savings if the 13 full-time council members were downsized to 7 part-time members as in Bloomington and Blaine.

h) Walter Dziedzic, 2727 Cleveland Street Northeast, stated that while he didn't agree with Paul Ostrow, he agreed he had the right to bring forward the proposals. The Park Board, has a suburban style of government. It has a city manager style government. Jon Gurban is the city manager for the Park Board. The most important thing the nine Park Commissioners do is elect that person to run the government. In the federal government, state government, Met Council, he didn't see an administrator running the show. Pat Scott was absolutely correct in everything she talked about. He agreed this should be on the ballot. But one other item should also be on the ballot - giving the Park Board complete financial independence from the city. Vote, but don't fix something that is not broken.

i) Gayle Bonneville, 3231 Pierce Street Northeast, stated that she was opposed to the elimination of the Board of Estimate and Taxation and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. She can vote for the City Council, Park Board, and Board of Estimate and Taxation. She has never been able to vote for the Met Council. They are all appointed. This would become an appointment process and a lot of authority would be given to one elected official, your City Council member. She wanted, and deserved, to vote for these positions. The more democracy, the better. She was very opposed to the proposed amendments. More democracy, not less.

j) Tom Hoch, 601 Madison Street Northeast, stated that he had worked for the city of Minneapolis in a variety of capacities for about 17 years. He thought it was important to put this in front of the voters. This is a great discussion. It had been interesting to listen to other people comment. People said things he hadn't thought about when he was thinking about these issues. It is a great opportunity to engage the people of the city on the kind of government they really want. He encouraged the Charter Commission to put these three issues on the ballot.

k) Martha Allen, 4845 Xerxes Avenue South, stated that she was a retired reporter for the Star Tribune. She felt the issues should be on the ballot. When she was covering City Hall as a reporter, she had no clue who the Park Board Commissioners were, and she has no clue who her Commissioner is now. Statistics show that in 1993, 103,000 votes were cast for mayoral candidates, but only 33,000 to 52,000 were cast for the independent board seats. In 2005, 80,000 mayoral votes were cast, but between 20,000 to 31,000 votes were cast for independent board seats. If people don't know who their members are, they just leave it blank. How can there be transparency or accountability if people don't even know who their Park Board member is? She was in favor of eliminating the Park Board and getting it into a city department so the parks will be run more efficiently and effectively.

l) Arthur T. Himmelman, 210 West Grant Street, stated that one thing to keep in mind is that before the City Council takes on more responsibility, they should have a proven track record of excellence in many other areas that they work in. So far, he hasn't seen that they are ready to take on this kind of responsibility. Maybe the City Council doesn't have enough to do. He has worked across the country on partnerships and coalitions, and three things in particular are demanded: mutual respect, mutual learning, and mutual accountability. He had been working with East Phillips on the cultural center, and there had been some differences of opinion with the Park Board. What happened recently was that six Park Board Commissioners came out to East Phillips and sat down at a meeting and talked with people for 2 to 3 hours about how to work out something with mutual respect, learning, and accountability. The Superintendent assigned key staff members. Residents and the Park Commissioners are working together to make a difference in their community. You will not see six City Council members show up in a community, roll up their sleeves, and get the work done.

m) Michael Rainville, 89 7th Avenue Northeast, stated that he was in favor of an independent Park Board. Put the issue on the ballot.

n) Pat Scott, 2413 Russell Avenue South, stated that she supported the Park Board. Instead of having the question of doing away with the Park Board, the question should be about reducing the number of City Council members. There are too many people who are

being paid too much to do too little. She noted she was speaking as a former City Council member. The comment has been made that there are too many bosses in City Hall. One way to deal with that would be to reduce the number. Instead of doing away with the Board of Estimate and Taxation, a second Park Board member should be added to it. The Park Board should be given the kind of support that they need. If they had two representatives on the Board of Estimate and Taxation, they would be able to hold their own much better in terms of working with the City Council and getting sufficient funds to run the park system. They have been starved by the people in City Hall.

o) Jan Morse, 518 7th Street Southeast, stated that she had found the Park Board to be a very responsive and effective city service. She had an opportunity to work with them on a project several years ago involving a freeway planting, and they were a great partner and allowed a lot of citizen participation. It is difficult for people to be engaged with city government, but the Park Board is very responsive and a well functioning unit. Give them what they need because they do a great job. Minneapolis is the city of parks.

p) Liz Wielinski, 3519 2nd Street Northeast, stated that she was running for the Park Board. She believed the City had gone down the wrong path. They are doing three things that are really unnecessary. (1) The city administrator position. It seemed to her that there were 13 people who didn't want to take any flack for having to do their jobs. If they don't think that they can get together and decide whether to hire or fire a bad police or fire chief and need a city administrator to do that, then maybe they are in the wrong job. (2) The Board of Estimate and Taxation. The city went to the legislature and could get nowhere with bonding for the Target Center. The neighborhoods went to the state and they got them to look at NRP. The city glommed onto the work of the neighbors in order to get their bonding money for Target Center. If they go to the state to try to get their own bonding when they eliminate the Board of Estimate and Taxation, they aren't going to have the citizens there with them because the citizens are tired of the city eliminating their elected boards. (3) The Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. She was a co-founder of a group called Park Watch; probably the Park Board's biggest critic. There are things the Park Board does that aren't great, which is why she was running for the seat. However, she would never want to lose the independent Park Board. They are the reason the city has the parks that they do. Just because a thing needs a little fixing doesn't mean you get rid of it.

q) Diane Hofstede, City Council Member Ward 3, stated that she was speaking in opposition of all three charter suggestions. The city has a history of strong community engagement. The Board of Estimate and Taxation is a means in which there can be checks and balances on city activities regarding finances. They haven't always agreed, and that is a good thing. It means they are doing their homework and they really care about the effect on the tax payers. The Minneapolis Park Board has over 100 years of rich service. It is not perfect, but we are working to make things better. The city just passed a Park Dedication Fee, a way in which the parks can be made stronger, better, and more usable for all of the community. They went to the state legislature last year with the Park Board and created the new Minneapolis Riverfront Corporation to reclaim the riverfront. This is an example of leadership and community engagement. That is why there shouldn't be a city manager; there shouldn't be one appointed person that speaks for the people. If people don't like the way someone is doing a job, they have the right to vote them out. That is a powerful position. Don't give it up.

r) Scott Vreeland, 2437 33rd Avenue South, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Commissioner, stated that he did not support the elimination of the Park Board. It is a sense of history and a sense of the future. What is the mission of the Park Board? To preserve, to protect, to make sure that we always have these resources, to provide recreation services. What is the mission of the City? You don't want to hand over something that is a great treasure to someone who does not have the same kind of care, understanding, and dedication. The Park Board has been under tremendous pressures because the City Council doesn't share the same values and has not been funding the Park Board at the rate more citizens would like to see. Park Board infrastructure is the last in line, the lowest on the totem pole of the current City Council. The city took over parkway lighting and paving, and those are in terrible condition. City streets are in terrible condition, too. It is really important to have the voice of the independent board out there speaking for the citizens who really care about this park system. If you don't have that voice, if you have people appointed by the Mayor and the Council, those voices will become quieter and quieter. Pave paradise, put up a parking lot. We need more paradise and less parking lot.

s) Marcus Ford, 611 East Franklin Avenue, stated that he was opposed to the elimination of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. While he agreed that the Park Board has had some issues, he also believed that they were human. He has lived here all his life and spent a lot of time in the parks. The parks are the heart and soul of the city. The Park Board is not perfect, but they do their best. He was opposed to the elimination of the Park Board.

t) Craig Rapp, with the International City/County Management Association, stated that one of the cities he used to manage won two gold medals for great parks. When he was at the Metropolitan Council, he worked on the Metropolitan Parks and Open Spaces Commission. He understood the challenges and desires of people who want to keep the system the way it is. On the other hand, he currently consults with cities and counties around the country as part of his job, and he sees a different set of park advisory roles and park systems. Everyone here tonight cares a lot about the parks in the city. But he has worked in a lot of places where there is an environmental ethic, an outdoor park ethic, and in those situations they don't have an elected or separate body for parks, but they manage because of the depth of their feeling for their parks to fund high quality recreation and park environments and he felt that Minneapolis would do that because the residents would demand it.

u) Jeremy Wieland, 737 Van Buren Street Northeast, stated that he was in favor of placing this question on the ballot in November. Elected officials will be held accountable for parks. Commissioner Dzedzic, before he was on the Park Board was on the City Council. He did not all of a sudden go from a person who hated parks to a person who loved parks. He has always loved parks. This question should be on the ballot to allow open discussion. People may change each other's minds.

v) Michael Darger, 3455 Hayes Northeast, stated that his wife feels strongly that the independent Park Board should remain, and it was partly because of the service of Walt Dzedzic. However, he believed that reexamining the form of government in Minneapolis made a lot of sense. He was concerned that the city has a very obfuscated, hard to understand way governance. He felt the Board of Estimate and Taxation was a hidden form of government. We need transparency and accountability in our government. This should be on the ballot. He was in favor of the independent Park Board, but felt the other two

proposals made a lot of sense. The people should have the chance to examine the governance of the city.

w) John Erwin, 3300 24th Street East, stated that he was a professor of horticulture at the University of Minnesota, was once a Park Board Commissioner, and was a candidate this year, as well. Regarding the discussion about efficiency, the City Council's administrative costs are 2.6%; the Park Board's are 1.5%. The City Council's debt service is 10%; the Park Board's is 2%. The tax levy of the city is 8%, and the Park Board has taken 4%. The Park Board is one of the most efficient parts of the city government. The structure of the city should reflect the priorities of its citizens. Minneapolis' structure was set up because the priorities of the citizens of Minneapolis were parks. It is one of the reasons he moved here. Do you really think that decreasing the number of people will increase the accountability and responsiveness of our government? The total cost of the Park Board Commissioners salaries is less than the cost of one City Council member and a support person. They could reduce one City Council person and it would make up the cost of all the salaries of the Park Board Commissioners. Yes, Minneapolis' government is terribly messy, but Minneapolis is special because everyone is involved. It is a special place. Do not take that away.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Peggy Menshek
Council Committee Coordinator