



Dakota County Planning Commission Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

Quorum for this meeting was not reached and the meeting was not called to order

Date: 6/27/2024

Notes prepared by Liz Hansen

Location: Western Service Center

Time: 7:00 p.m. to 9:05 p.m.

Attendance

Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- James Guttmann
- Tony Nelson
- Lori Hansen
- Barry Graham
- Mike Cahn

Member(s) Absent:

- Brady Folkestad
- Jill Smith
- Dennis Peine
- Kelly Kausel

Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- Margaret Stone, Library Director
- Niki Geisler, Parks Director
- Lil Leatham, Principal Planner
- Katherine Priebe, Planner Intern
- Nikki Stewart, Environmental Resources Director
- Renee Burman, Environmental Initiatives Supervisor
- Gena Gerard, Sr. Environmental Specialist

A quorum was not reached. The meeting was not able to be convened.

Planning Commissioners requested that staff make their presentations and offered to provide individual comments.

Library Strategic Plan – Information (Margaret Stone – Dakota County Library System)

Margaret Stone, Library Director, gave an informational presentation on Dakota County's library system's strategic plan.

Questions and comments below, along with responses from staff (*italics*):

One suggestion to increase visitation to Dakota County libraries is to engage local businesses or Homeowners' Associations by providing meeting spaces within the library for people to use, as it is difficult for these groups to find mutual places to meet.

A comment was made that the new self-service hours have been incredibly convenient and have made it much easier for everyone to access the resources they need.

In order to better engage youth, one suggestion was made for library staff to select a high school and create focus groups to gather information about how the library system can better serve students at this stage of their lives.

Another way to engage youth is to meet with each school's National Honor Society. The library could consider aligning with the National Honor Society's service hour requirements and collaborate on projects and activities.

A question was asked about whether people are checking out more online/electronic materials and fewer books. *Staff responded that approximately 30% of checkouts were ebooks or audiobooks and that staff hopes to reach that group through the survey.*

A comment was made that library meeting rooms are used for online meetings and interviews.

A comment was made that 360 Communities would be a good group for the library to engage about library programming and new library materials/collections.

A comment was made that if Library staff are engaging students in schools it would be a good time to engage teachers as well. Teachers may have some good insight about the materials that students are interested in and how the library system can help children succeed. *Staff responded that teachers and school administrators will be engaged in the process.*

A comment was made that the Library System should keep on file hard copies of adopted plans, not just when they are out for public review, but once they have been adopted so that residents can have access to these documents.

A suggestion was made that the Library consider holding educational/extension classes, such as Artificial Intelligence for seniors and similar topics that bring in expert speakers to the community.

Staff concluded by thanking Planning Commissioners for providing their individual comments and suggestions about how to engage Dakota County residents in the upcoming Library Strategic Plan process.

2050 Park Vision Plan Public Engagement – Information (Lil Leatham, Katherine Priebe, - Planning)

Katherine Priebe, Planner Intern, gave an informational presentation on upcoming public engagement strategies for the 2050 Park Vision Plan and equitable representation in Dakota County Parks.

Questions and comments below, along with responses from staff (italics):

A comment was made that there are many industries that are not very diverse, using the example of the insurance industry and that it is a challenge to increase diversity. Often there are barriers such as affordable transportation that need to be overcome. Perhaps Dakota County can offer public transportation options from core areas to rural, regional park locations to make rural parks more accessible.

Being personally introduced to a new park is an effective way to help people unfamiliar with parks feel comfortable visiting for the first time.

Diamond Path Elementary is an international magnet school in District 196. This school may be a good location to connect with diverse students and their families and learn about their interests and ideas for activities in parks.

Tailoring volunteer opportunities to appeal to different cultural groups in Dakota County may help people become more familiar with parks and help Parks staff better understand the needs of its residents.

A suggestion was made to hold “activity/field days” as part of school programs to introduce students and parents from all cultures to parks. People who attend field days may return for future visits.

It is important that we talk to people from different cultures who live in Dakota County before we propose solutions. *Staff responded that Dakota County has hired a public engagement specialist to reach out to all Dakota County residents, including those that are traditionally underrepresented, to gather information about what people would like from their park system.*

A question was raised about whether city parks also have a lower percentage of visits from people of diverse cultural backgrounds. *Staff responded that lower park visitation from underrepresented populations is an industry-wide challenge, affecting cities, counties, and many park providers.*

A comment was made that it is important to consider the natural setting and site characteristics of a particular park in addition to what activities people desire from their park system when preparing the master plan for that particular park. It is important to exercise caution when introducing new park activities to ensure they are suitable for the location.

A comment was made that the Midwest is not unlike the rest of the country in that it continues to struggle with racism and segregation. This poses a challenge for the County’s park system.

A comment was made that camping and mountain biking can be expensive. Economic barriers may impact use. The County should offer free or reduced price gear to lower income visitors to lessen economic barriers to participation.

Staff concluded their presentation by describing some of the upcoming Park Visioning public engagement events and forums that will be held this summer.

Solid Waste Management Plan – Action (Renee Burman – Environment and Natural Resources)

Renee Burman, Environmental Initiatives Supervisor, and Gena Gerard, Senior Environmental Specialist, presented Dakota County's draft Solid Waste Management Plan. Due to lack of a quorum, the Planning Commission was unable to vote on whether to recommend the release of the draft 2024-2044 Solid Waste Management Plan for public review.

Questions and comments below, along with responses from staff (italics):

A comment was made that the draft plan includes extensive information on the management and disposal of tree waste. *Staff responded that the state of Minnesota is having us look more at wood waste and ensure that it's properly managed and in response to the impacts of the Emerald Ash Borer.*

A comment was made that one of the challenges of the organic waste initiatives will be for residents to place their organic waste in the right disposal containers correctly.

A comment was made in support of the food rescue hierarchy described in the plan.

Staff did an excellent job with the broad-based engagement process, including common themes and competing interests.

A comment was made that one of the most effective strategies for increasing recycling has been to have stickers on the garbage cans for residents. A similar strategy may work for organics. Using multiple languages may also help.

A comment was made that the County should consider hiring contractors that strive to reuse building materials for new construction.

A suggestion was made to add strategies that remove plastics and nonrecyclable containers from the waste stream by placing fees on fast food restaurants and other businesses that use non-recyclable or non-compostable containers.

A comment was made that it is very important to have good reliable data to know if waste reduction and management strategies are working. *Staff responded in agreement and mentioned that regular waste sorts will be used to monitor progress and compliance.*

A Planning Commissioner complimented staff for a successful re-use program that directs second hand appliances to people in need and out of the landfill.

Staff concluded their presentation by outlining the next steps for the presentation to the County Board at the Physical Development Committee, and the potential release of the Solid Waste Management Plan.

Topics for next meeting (Thursday, July 25, 2024)

Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, provided an overview of next month's meeting topics:

- 2050 Park Vision Plan, Goals and Strategies

**Next Meeting: Thursday, July 25, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County
Western Service Center, Apple Valley**

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator