

1/6/2020

Good Afternoon City of Minneapolis Charter Commission,

I am requesting that the City of Minneapolis Charter Commission update the city charter to:

1. **CANCEL THE MPRB OPERATION AS AN INDEPENDENT semi autonomous AGENCY OUTSIDE OF THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS (IE CHANGE THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS CHARTER) and incorporate the MPRB as a department of the City of Minneapolis.** This is a best practice and is what is done in many other major US city. Why should we have the MPRB operating outside of the City of Minneapolis structure? It doesn't make any sense and this past year we saw the MPRB Boards inability and unwillingness to work with experts in the appropriate city and state agencies when issues arose that were outside their jurisdiction and expertise.
2. **Cut the current paid MPRB Board of Commissioners which is currently wasting \$250,000/yr of tax payer dollars and switch this MPRB board over to a Mayor and City Council appointed board of City (see recommendation for language below from the City of Denver City Charter – page 4).** The current commissioners do nothing but attend a meeting twice a month and they collect over \$12,000/yr plus benefits. They do not respond to constituents. They do not take feedback. They don't even set up their MPRB email accounts. This is absurd and inappropriate.
3. I implore you to be good stewards of City of Minneapolis tax payer dollars. Having the MPRB operate separately from the city of Minneapolis makes absolutely no fiscal sense. **SAVE THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS TAX PAYERS money they are paying twice due to the MPRB operating duplicative shared services as the city already has them (Things like HR, Customer service, finance and any other administrative operations, ect).** Instead roll all of these services in to the current flow of work for the City of Minneapolis shared business services functions (JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER DEPARTMENT IN THE CITY DOES.) **The money saved by doing this can go to help the actual expert city agencies that will help individuals experiencing homelessness and can be used to fund city services such as housing, food, mental health, addiction and other public health related services.**
4. **Ensure that the MPRB aligns with the Minneapolis 2040 goals.** The out of alignment MPRB board of commissioners went ahead and created a separate plan called the MPRB Comprehensive Plan – Parks for All, which they explicitly state is different from the Minneapolis 2040 goals. Are there shared commonalities? Sure, but we are the City of Minneapolis. Why don't they utilize and create the MPRB's future plan based on the Minneapolis 2040 goals? It's out of alignment and not appropriate. The city needs to align the MPRB with it. All of our city agencies need to work together. They also never share MPRB park plans or public engagement opportunities through the City of Minneapolis news, thus leaving out many citizen opinions because they don't seem to want to collaborate with the actual city they are a part of.

Discussion and facts related to this issue

Overall, the way that the MPRB is currently operating due to the city charter is a waste of city tax payer dollars, is inefficient, is not a best practice for city park management (as is evidenced by how other major US cities operate city parks) and the current MPRB Board of Commissioners has shown that they

are inept and unable to effectively work with the appropriate expert city agencies when needs outside of their own agency arise (such as contacting the city public health officials, housing and homelessness agencies or the Red Cross).

The current MPRB Board of Commissioners actions have caused irreparable damage, harm and death to the citizens of Minneapolis. They have acted outside their agency and expertise and have failed the City of Minneapolis.

Specifically, the resolution the MPRB Board of Commissioner implemented this summer (Without announcing the resolution in a timely fashion and allowing time for PUBLIC COMMENT): [Resolution 2020-267](#) resulted in horrifying outcomes for those experiencing homelessness and for all in the city. **AND LET'S BE CLEAR, THE HORRIFYING NATURE OF THIS SITUATION WAS NOT DUE TO COVID-19 or the fault of individuals experiencing homelessness. The horrifying outcomes and happenings was due TO ABJECT FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP OF MPRB BOARD.** Especially the poor leadership of President Jono Cowgill.

We do not need a **paid** Board of Commissions at the MPRB who can not critically think and who act in a way that foolishly put all citizens public safety and public health at risk during the COVID-19 Pandemic. If they would have effectively called on appropriate city expert partners when the encampment arose at Powderhorn Park and allowed individuals who are experts in homelessness, housing and emergency management assist and manage the situation – **we would have not seen the below horrifying outcomes.**

1. Due to the MPRB Board of Commissioners failed decision to illegally allow dangerous and unsafe encampments the following incidents occurred in the MPRB Parks and the residents experiencing homelessness and citizens in the community were subjected to horrifying, dangerous (deadly) and unsanitary conditions including:

- [There was a teen sexually assaulted at a "campsite" at Powderhorn on June 25th](#)
- [Two sexual assaults were reported one on June 28th and another of a minor on July 5th](#)
- There was a teen shot several times at an encampment at Peavey Park: <https://www.startribune.com/teen-shot-several-times-near-encampment-at-peavey-park-in-minneapolis-reports-say/571595302/>
- A man was fatally shot near Powderhorn Park 6/22
- [7/14 – a man was shot at Powderhorn park](#)
- On Thursday, July 16 – two more individuals were shot at the Peavey Park encampment: <https://www.startribune.com/2-shot-wounded-at-homeless-encampment-in-peavey-field-park/571797252/>
- **The MPRB allowed people in the encampments and residents surrounding the encampments to be maced, have rocks thrown at them, teens have been raped, people have been shot dead. (Listen to any of the MPRB Board meetings from this summer to understand how citizens and individuals living in the parks have been assaulted, raped, and their has been consistent criminal activity. You can find the link**

to watch the meetings

here <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcNuebgSUruDb4eQaigQU4aiCWtH5R1Gs>

- **The MPRB has allowed children to be subjected to live in dangerous and predatory encampments during a public health pandemic (when there are housing options available - I know - I called 211) I even called child protection services to report this issue. This is truly disturbing. The city has resources to help CHILDREN AND I CONFIRMED THIS! To subject innocent children to these living conditions is abhorrent and disturbing. The city CAN NOT ALLOW LEADERSHIP LIKE THIS.**
 - **The MPRB enabled the largest drug camp in state history where individuals spread over 5000 hypodermic needles in one park and didn't allow MDH staff in to empty biohazard containers. I called MDH and spoke with the Hepatitis C department. The staff noted this occurrence.**
 - **The Board of Commissioner have put people living in encampments at risk for hepatitis C.**
 - **The MPRB Board of Commissioners lie to the public over and over again that there aren't housing options and shelters for individuals experiencing homelessness (there are - call 211).**
 - **The encampments that the MPRB allowed are not appropriate for living. The parks are unfit for residential living. There is not access to clean water, appropriate sanitation and public safety for the homeless citizens living there or the residents in the area. This is a MAJOR public health and safety risk for individuals experiencing homelessness and shows GROSS NEGLIGENCE on BEHALF OF THE MPRB Board of Commissioners.**
 - **They have no park police between 1am-6am and disbanded their agreement with the MPD and therefore there is NO Public safety plan between these hours at the parks. Therefore people should not be living in these parks.**
 - **Children have had no safe parks to go to during a pandemic and schools are closed.**
2. **The MPRB Board does not follow their own resolutions or state laws around encampments near school zones endangering children and enabling predatory and dangerous activity at Peavy Park. Case in point, The Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board released Resolution 2020-267 about the encampments found**
here: http://minneapolisparksmn.igmp2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?Frame=&MeetingID=2087&MediaPosition=&ID=5115&CssClass=

The MPRB board meetings have seen **CHILDREN, STUDENTS, Parents, Administrators from the school and community members requesting at [MPRB meetings](#) asking that this encampment to be closed and YET the MPRB continues to not act, PUTTING STUDENTS LIVES AND SAFETY AT RISK. There have been shootings, deaths, overdoses and criminal activity at this park. What is the problem?**

3. The MPRB Board of Commissions showed that they can not think critically, the MPRB has no emergency/crisis management plan and they do not know how to collaborate with other city agencies who are experts.

I propose that you update the City of Minneapolis Charter to mirror what the City of Denver, CO Charter utilizes for the management of their cities Parks and Recreation Department. Please take the following two key actions:

1. **Please update the City of Minneapolis charter to disband their operation as an independent and semi-autonomous agency outside of the city of Minneapolis and include them as a City Department operating within the city structure. This will encourage cross functional work relationships with the appropriate city and state agencies when the needs arise.**
2. **Secondly, change the MPRB board to a Mayor and City Council appointed Board of Commissioners that is unpaid. Stop the waste of city tax payer funds for the current paid MRPB Board of Commissioners and the lack of critical thinking that is happening at the MPRB.**

See the appropriate recommended updates to the Charter from the City of Denver's best practice approach to city Parks and Recreation department management:

Parks And Recreation Charter language from the City of Denver Charter: (which can be found [here.](#))

- PART 4. - PARKS AND RECREATION

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- § 2.4.1 - Department of Parks and Recreation created.

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There shall be and hereby is created a Department of Parks and Recreation to be composed of, but not limited to, a Division of Parks and a Division of Recreation.

(Charter 1960, A4.1; amended May 17, 1955)

- **§ 2.4.2 - Manager of Parks and Recreation.**

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The Manager of Parks and Recreation (hereinafter called the "Manager") shall be the officer in full charge and control of the Department, shall devote full time to the duties of the office, shall be a member of the Mayor's Cabinet, shall be nominated and, by and with consent of City Council, appointed by the Mayor and shall hold office at the pleasure of the Mayor.

(Charter 1960, A4.2; amended May 17, 1955; amended May 15, 1973; Ord. No. 428-02, § 1, 6-3-02, elec. 8-13-02; Ord. No. 536-20, § 1, 7-13-20, elec. 11-3-20)

- **§ 2.4.3 - Board of Parks and Recreation.**

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There is hereby created a Board of Parks and Recreation (hereinafter called the "Board") consisting of nineteen members. One of the members shall be a member of the Board of School District No. 1 designated by the Board of the School District. Five members of the Board shall be appointed by the Mayor. Thirteen of the members shall represent the thirteen City Council members and shall be appointed by the thirteen Councilmembers. The appointees of the eleven district Council members shall reside in the district of the appointing member. The appointees of the two at-large Councilmembers shall each reside in the City and County of Denver. Members shall serve at the pleasure of their respective appointing authorities. Members of the Board shall serve without pay. The Board shall advise the Manager with respect to the policy and operation of the Department and shall review and comment on the proposed annual budget for the Department.

(Charter 1960, A4.3, A4.3-1; Amended May 17, 1955; amended May 19, 1987)

- **§ 2.4.4 - Powers and duties of Department of Parks and Recreation.**

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The following duties and powers are hereby vested in the Department of Parks and Recreation.

(A)

Park and other recreational facilities. Management, operation and control of all facilities, either within or without the territorial limits of the City and County, owned by the City and County for park and recreational purposes, including the right to make reasonable charges, subject to ordinance approval, for the use of any special facility or activity and management and control of the operation, care, repair and maintenance of all structures in which and all land on which those facilities are located and operated. At the request of the Department, Council shall provide, by ordinance, for the enforcement of the rules and regulations of the Department.

(B)

Building line restrictions around parks and parkways. To establish a building line or lines, determining the distance at which all structures may be erected upon any private premises fronting any park or parkway and, in the name of the City and County, to prevent the erection and require the removal of all structures outside said lines. No permit shall be issued authorizing the erection of any structure outside the building line so established.

(C)

Licenses, privileges and concessions. In the manner and pursuant to terms and conditions fixed by the Mayor's cabinet, to grant or refuse the license or privilege of operating concessions in or of selling goods and services in all parks and recreational facilities and on the streets and sidewalks within three hundred feet of the boundary of any park or recreational facility.

(D)

Landscaping of public ways and thoroughfares. Landscaping and beautification, together with such horticultural maintenance as appears desirable in the public interest, of suitable portions of any public ways, thoroughfares, pleasure driveways and similar facilities as determined by agreement with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

(E)

Gifts. Management and control of all real or personal property, including all rents, issues and profits thereof, granted, bequeathed, devised or conveyed to the City and County for the purpose of the creation, improvement or ornamentation of any park, boulevard, pleasure way, parkway or recreational facility or for the establishment or maintenance therein of museums, zoological or other gardens, collections of natural history, observatories or recreational facilities; provided, however, that no such gifts shall be accepted without the prior approval of the Mayor and Council.

(F)

Cooperative agreements.

(i)

To conduct negotiations for cooperative agreements with School District No. 1 and other public and private agencies for the development of park and recreational facilities, programs and activities and for the establishment and maintenance of the museums, zoological or other gardens, collections of natural history and observatories. Such agreements may provide for such grants-in-aid or appropriations from the General Fund as may be made from time to time by Council, and the Manager, subject to approval by ordinance, may delegate his or her functions in connection with these matters.

(ii)

And the Council may place the public playgrounds under the supervision and control of the School Board of the City and County.

(Charter 1960, A4.4, C6.2; amended May 17, 1955. Paragraph (F)(ii) amended February 14, 1913; amended May 17, 1916; Ord. No. 428-02, § 1, 6-3-02, elec. 8-13-02 Ord. No. 407-13, § 2, 8-26-13, elec. 11-5-13; Ord. No. 529-19, § 1, 6-24-19, elec. 11-5-19)

