

# **Response to the 2020 Hiawatha Golf Course Master Plan - 4/9/2020**

The latest Hiawatha Golf Course Master Plan was put out by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) on April 9, 2020. We characterize this plan as another example of pie-in-the-sky ideas with little ability to pay for them. Plus, after 6 months, details for many of the CAC items are still not given. And, with the CAC being disbanded by the MPRB, who will hold the MPRB's feet to the fire regarding this proposal?

SaveHiawatha18 still believes that the best use of this property is an improved 18-hole golf course!

Here are SaveHiawatha18's comments and concerns.

## **THE BERM**

The berm between the golf course and Lake Hiawatha has been used as a main reason why the 18-hole golf course has to go. But, it is still as prominent as ever in this new plan. It was originally deemed to be so unstable that it could break and drown golfers. Then, in the MPRB's answer to the CAC about why they want to reduce pumping they talked mostly about why the berm is bad, separating the lake from the rest of the floodplain. Now the berm will serve as a walking/bike path around the north and west side of Lake Hiawatha, still separating the lake from this portion of the floodplain, and it will be surrounded on both sides by water. Huh??? It seems very unlikely that the berm will survive being saturated with water on both sides considering the volume of water that will be coming at it from both sides, thus truly being unsafe for heavy usage by pedestrians and bicyclists. This is an example of why the MPRB has so little credibility.

And, in reality, the MPRB idea is to destroy the 18-hole golf course for a tiny amount of floodplain storage which will be a drop in the bucket considering the amount of water that goes through Lake Hiawatha each year.

Along with the retention of the berm, it appears that the MPRB will be building more little islands in a lake that is having trouble handling all of the water that is currently entering it???? These islands seem problematic at best.

## **MINNEHAHA CREEK**

The plan shows that the inlet of Minnehaha Creek to the property will now become 2 huge

contained ponds with small outlets between them. This would seem to create a huge build-up of sand and debris and trash behind the "pedestrian paths" that divide the water from the lake. Plus, this seems to have the potential of backing up water behind these barriers. And, this area will need to be continually dredged and cleaned up. The MPRB has not dredged the inlet for many years; are they really going to start now? This is the opposite of what needs to be done with the inlet, which is to get the water quickly in and out of the lake considering the high volumes of water that go through Lake Hiawatha. Also, is there a plan for dealing with the trash and pollution coming from Minnehaha Creek?

## **GOLF COURSE**

While there is less water in this plan than the previous plan, there is still a good amount of a water which makes the golf course less playable, especially for beginners.

Of more concern is the fact that the plan says that all golf play spaces will be elevated above the normal water levels of Lake Hiawatha, with "elevating of critical features (tees, greens, etc.) above the 10% annual flood elevation." This will involve adding a massive amount of fill on this property, in some cases elevating the ground by 6-8 feet. This will no longer be a wetland restoration project as stated by Mr. Schroeder; it will be a massive redevelopment of this property.

You need more than "some golf carts", but it should also be walkable.

To be clear, Hiawatha Golf Course is already certified through the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf. You can continue the certification and enhance the property based on the principles of the program.

The new driving range would be right across the street from the homes. A driving range has a high level of constant activity unlike the current 14th and 15th holes. This would be very undesirable to the homes across the street. The redevelopment they are planning and the driving range location are on the scale of Theodore Wirth. If you look at a map, the nearest house to the Theodore Wirth clubhouse is 9 blocks away. For comparison to the Hiawatha location along Longfellow Ave, that would put the new driving range well west of Bloomington Ave, near St. Mary's graveyard. The tee box for the new driving range would literally be about 40 feet from the front doors of the houses across the street. The driving range should be inside the golf course away from the homes.

Questions:

- What is the yardage of this new golf course, and detailed yardage for each hole? In other words, is this a regulation course, an executive course or something in between?

- How many stations will be on the driving range compared to the current driving range? This affects projected revenue.

## **NEW BUILDINGS ON THE KNOLL**

The MPRB proposes 3 new buildings on the knoll. A new restaurant, a small pro shop and a canoe rental.

- This seems to be a lot of buildings on a very small knoll. The original contracted designers, when asked about the buildings in the previous plan, had no idea if their designs had accounted for set-backs. Concerns are whether there is enough room for all of these buildings, plus adequate parking. This is not addressed in the plan.
- Another concern is that this restaurant will be competing with 2 restaurants, 2 coffee shops and 1 ice cream shop one block away. And, it will compete with the Park Board's own concession, Sand Castle, approximately 3 blocks away.
- Canoe rental building and location. This amenity is very concerning from a safety perspective. It is located in the middle of a golf course, running directly between 2 holes. High levels of water activities (canoeing, etc.) in between holes 1 and 6 puts people at high risk of being hit by golf balls. If people want canoe rentals and boat access to the lake, the more appropriate place for this to occur is at the Park Building on the east side of the lake, not in the middle of a golf course where they can get hit by golf balls.
- It appears that the golf course patrons will be getting short shrift with a small pro shop with "informal lockers".

We recommend that there only be one building which serves as the golf course clubhouse that would include a nice restaurant, with adequate parking. That is likely all that will fit on the knoll.

## **WETLAND RESTORATION**

The MPRB has called this project a wetland restoration project. This project will be anything but a wetland restoration project. The amount of excavation that will need to be done to get 9 holes of golf above 814.2 feet will be massive, totally reconstructing this former wetland.

## **PHOSPHORUS MITIGATION**

It is totally unclear how phosphorus mitigation will be done with all of this open water. Also, the MPRB and MCWD have not been diligent in maintaining existing BMPs for phosphorus reduction, for example, at Lake Nokomis. Why would they maintain this huge one any better?

The following phosphorus mitigation assessment comes from the hydrologist in the SaveHiawath18 group.

We consider the described phosphorus mitigation to be a false premise for needing to do these modifications. According to the MCWD's annual reporting, total phosphorus concentrations from sample stations along Minnehaha Creek between Excelsior Blvd and Hiawatha Avenue range from approximately 69 micrograms per liter (ug/L) and 75 ug/L. Someone should ask, are these concentrations significantly elevated and do they warrant spending \$42M to mitigate at the tail end of the watershed? The phosphorus concentrations in the surface waters didn't increase overnight; they are the result of 75+ years of loading within the watershed and have been steadily decreasing and will continue to decline based on current BMPs and practices that limit the use of phosphorus in the last 10 - 15 years. Since the problem developed over the last 75+ years, it'll take longer than 1 or 2 years to reduce the problem, and the concentrations can be expected to continue to decline over time regardless of any new mitigation strategies.

IN ADDITION: The requirement to mitigate phosphorus is determined by the City of Minneapolis's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. This is the City's agreement with the MPCA (and in turn the EPA) for the outfall of where Minnehaha Creek discharges to the Mississippi River (compliance point). The City's NPDES permit limit for total phosphorus is 100 ug/L. This is important because the total phosphorus concentration in the last sampling station at Hiawatha Avenue is 77 ug/L. As such, the City is currently meeting the permit requirements with regard to phosphorus and the MPCA would not require mitigation.

If someone comes back and says, "but because Lake Nokomis and Lake Hiawatha are considered Class 2B waters and the total phosphorus limits were set at 50 ug/L" (which is actually really strange because the phosphorus limits in these lakes were only recently designated in the state statute for some reason, and the state statute only specifically calls out about 10 of the 15,000+ lakes in the state), I would argue that these are not the compliance points for the entire watershed, the compliance point is the Mississippi River outlet. If the MCWD or the MPCA want to consider these lakes to be the compliance point, then they need to mitigate the phosphorus upstream of these waters in order to meet their cleanup goal. As referenced in the Barr Report, Lake Hiawatha is just a section of the creek that has been widened, but the MPCA called it a lake because it's over 15 feet deep (or something like that).

## **PROTECTING THE HOMES FROM FLOODING**

This is the most important item to the CAC, and absolutely no engineering details are given as to how the neighborhoods will be protected from flooding.

It is stated that the golf course will be elevated above the normal water level of Lake Hiawatha, which would be above 814.2 feet. This will put an enormous amount of fill on this property

which will totally change the current flood plain. This would also appear to trap water in the neighborhoods rather than having the current downward flow into and through the golf course. Is the golf course a new berm?

The statement that this new design will "better accommodate the complicated hydrology and anticipated flows resulting from our changing climate, including more frequent extreme rainfalls" is highly suspect. The tiny amount of extra water storage is unlikely to accommodate the increased water due to increased infrastructure development in both Minneapolis and the suburbs, and expected climate change. Plus, part of the plan states that it expects to get money from "watershed credits" which means that the MPRB will be selling water storage to developers and other communities to make money off of the Lake Hiawatha neighborhood, and thus, dumping more water into Lake Hiawatha.

The "complicated hydrology" of the area is a concern considering that the MPRB and MCWD have not effectively solved the problems of too much water in South Minneapolis over the past 40 years. For more information see, "Lake Hiawatha, the Dumping Ground."

### **THE 43RD STREET PIPE**

This plan would change the 43rd street pipe that runs under the golf course to Lake Hiawatha to an open channel starting at 43rd St. and 19th Ave. S.

The statement that this new channel will include "an opportunity to reduce flooding in the watershed to the north" is concerning. This indicates that the City and Park Board will allow even more water to be dumped into Lake Hiawatha which the lake already struggles to handle. This continues the last 40 years of using Lake Hiawatha as a dumping ground for water because it is a cheap solution. This can't continue!

Plus, the original Barr documents stated that no grading analysis had been done to see if this channel would even work. Has this been done? Because, if it doesn't work, the houses on 19th and 43rd will end up being the water repository.

It has been stated that this will allow trash mitigation to be done, but the trash mitigation can be done on the current pipe without making this change.

It is unclear how an open channel will substantially reduce pollutants to Lake Hiawatha when the whole system is really one bigger lake. To remove 100 pounds of phosphorus in the channel, you will have to dredge the channel to remove the plants that take up the phosphorus before they die in the fall. Otherwise, the plants will just die and release the phosphorus back into the water, and thus, into Lake Hiawatha.

It is true that the whole system will "require long-term maintenance to be successful." The problem with this is that the Park Board has been woefully inadequate at maintaining current infrastructure (like tennis courts, Nokomis constructed wetlands, park buildings, golf courses), so why would we expect that they would maintain this complex system?

## **PUMPING**

Pumping has been a main theme of the MPRB's reason to get rid of the 18-hole golf course. So, let's talk a little about pumping.

First of all, let us remember that the linchpin reason given for reducing pumping was that Hiawatha Golf Course was violating their pumping permits. SaveHiawatha18 proved that Hiawatha Golf Course has never violated the only 2 permits that they had which were for irrigation of the golf course. The pumping was to dewater the golf course, for which the DNR had not required a permit.

The MPRB was asked to answer the questions of "Why do they want to reduce pumping?" and "Why is Pumping Bad?". They have published a response that did not answer either question. So, they haven't fulfilled this CAC request yet.

Let's talk about saving money on pumping. Based on electric bills provided to SaveHiawatha18 by the MPRB for Hiawatha Golf Course, we are spending \$42-62 million to save a few hundred dollars per year in pumping cost. From 2011 to 2018, the TOTAL ANNUAL electric bills for Hiawatha Golf Course ranged from \$993 (2017) to \$2,375 (2013) PER YEAR. The Pump House portion of that bill ranged from \$174 (2012) to \$252 (2016) PER YEAR. So, for \$42 million dollars we can pay the whole electric bill for at least 17,684 years. For the same \$42 million dollars we can pay the whole pump house bill for at least 166,666 years. Thus, the cost of pumping is not an issue!

In the new plan, the pumping will be moved into the neighborhoods. But, there are few details given as to how this will work and how much water will be pumped. Thus, the CAC request for detailed engineering plans is unfulfilled at this time.

There is a bit of discussion about using the pumped water for golf course irrigation and snow-making. This brings up the following questions about groundwater pumping distribution as specified in the plan:

- On page 9 the MPRB shows that snowmaking will be done near the current maintenance building. On page 7 you show it in the park area at 44th and Longfellow. Is it both places? Why do you need it at 44th and Longfellow?????

- How are you irrigating the north eastern portion of the golf course?
- Groundwater Pumping Distribution diagram- Does this mean that you are trying to move the water south on Longfellow Ave. through the hill at 46th St. to get it to the irrigation system?
- It appears that the water is also being discharged to the channel, which will just be pumping the water in a circle. What percentage of water will be drawn back and repumped? Your previous number for this system was 46%?

## REVENUE & CAPITAL COSTS

### GOLF COURSE REVENUE:

- The MPRB expects the new 9-hole golf course to generate \$550,000 in revenue. This appears to be unrealistic. Fort Snelling has never made more than \$350,000 in the past 10 years. Add in a maximum of \$130,000 from the driving range (it's best years), and the most you could get is \$480,000. Although, the driving range appears to be much smaller, so the expected revenue would be less than \$130,000.
- The MPRB will now have two 9-hole golf courses within a couple of miles of each other which will compete for 9-hole customers.

### CAPITAL COSTS:

- The total price tag of \$43,000,000 appears to be ridiculously low considering the massive property alterations needed to bring the golf course above 814 feet (high normal for the Lake). Much of the golf course property is at 809 feet. Or, is the MCWD going to change their water management for Minnehaha Creek to stop sending so much water down the creek so that the Lake Hiawatha water levels will be maintained at a lower level?
- The \$11.2 million for construction of the golf course portion is supposed to come from the Minneapolis golf courses. With the MPRB's mismanagement of the golf courses over the past 10 years, they have struggled to make a profit. So, how can they possibly come up with this money? And, especially when one of the highest revenue 18-hole golf courses (Hiawatha) will be gone.
- Is Regional Water Management the MCWD? They are ready to contribute \$5 million?
- Wetland Banking - This is Mr. Schroeder's method to make some money - developers and other communities can pay to dump their water into Lake Hiawatha rather than mitigate it. This is the last thing this neighborhood needs, more water!!!
- Restaurant - The capital cost is \$6.35 million to be paid for by the Restaurateur and net revenue over time. But, the annual net revenue is estimated to be \$251,000.00, so it will take 25 years to pay off the capital costs. So, this restaurant will not make a profit for at least 25 years.
- Winter Activity Enterprise - The Park Board is suggesting that the Loppet or another

organization is going to sink almost \$4 million dollars into winter sports activities at Hiawatha Golf Course. And, somehow the organization will generate \$130,000 in annual revenue from Hiawatha Golf Course. In the last 10 years when the Park Board ran Winter Sports in the Enterprise Fund, Winter Sports lost increasing amounts of money every year. And, a supporter of the Loppet group has told us that the Loppet is losing money. It seems very unlikely that these improvements will be paid for by the Loppet or any other organization.

- Lakeside building and canoes. Another partner will pay for the capital cost of \$450,000. Again, this should be done on the east side of the lake, not in the middle of a golf course.

### **BACKYARD NEIGHBORHOOD PARK**

This area is very small and very close to the homes. It cannot accommodate a high level of activity without compromising the quiet nature of the neighborhood. Plus, the proposal adds water pumping and snowmaking; what is the level of noise that will be added to this little neighborhood? Also, where is the water being pumped for this groundwater pumping station. This property is subject to sinkholes and unstable ground which seems problematic for sidewalks and bike paths. This was not part of the previous plans, and should not be implemented without direct feedback from the nearby homeowners.

### **NO DETAILS FOR OTHER CAC REQUESTS**

After 6 months, the MPRB has not provided any details on the following items (just the same old stale statements):

- What will happen to existing memorials for people that exist on the golf course?
- What will be done to honor the African-American history of the course?
- Where is the new parking and traffic analysis for the neighborhood, especially considering the adding of a restaurant and the addition of the Bergan's development which adds over 100 vehicles to Longfellow Avenue?

Regarding honoring Hiawatha Golf Course's African-American history, the only way to honor this history is to retain a championship level 18-hole golf course, rather than giving the Black community a sub-standard 9-hole golf course which says, like always, that the Black community is not important enough to deserve a full 18-hole golf course like other communities.

You say that the golf experience should be available to all people; well, a 9-hole golf course is not the full golf experience! And, a good fostering of youth golfing requires an 18-hole golf course, not a partial experience.

## **OTHER AMENITIES?**

- You want to build a tower on the 12th tee right next to the crumbling tennis court that is not maintained?
- A fishing pier has existed on the east side of Lake Hiawatha since, at least, the 1960's. Why do we need another one on the west side of the lake. Just maintain the existing one.
- What is a cross-country ski stadium?
- How do you fat bike thru the water/swamp?