

Hiawatha Links Meeting Comments - August 2025

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board revealed their latest Hiawatha Golf Course concepts. Here are some comments on the latest Hiawatha Links project. Maybe some of these comments/questions are answered somewhere in the Park Board's documents or presentations, but the amount of information is way too overwhelming for anyone to digest. Is this intentional, so that people will just not respond at all?

Homeowners should be concerned about:

Most of the current golf course land is between 809 and 812.8 feet above sea level. The proposed plans will permanently fill the golf course property with water up to the level of Lake Hiawatha which varies from between 811 and 814 feet. And the new golf course will be filled with dirt to a level of 814 to 815 feet. The Park Board says that this will be offset by digging deeper holes in the golf course property to offset the storage lost by raising the golf course, but we saw nothing that indicates that these holes will not be filled with water, which means this volume will not be available for another big flood. This will, absolutely, reduce the currently available (unused) flood storage that protects the homes.

The new plan will put a trench across the street from the homes on 19th Avenue that will, supposedly, drain the water to the north (uphill?) from the 6th hole pond to the place where they will daylight the 43rd street pipe. Then, the storm water from the 44th street storm sewer and the 43rd street storm sewer will flow through the golf course to the lake. This waterway will be connected directly to the lake, which they admit will raise the water level in the new trenches to the level of the lake. The bottoms of some of the basements of the homes across the street are below the normal levels of the lake. They said that they will figure out later how to pump the water out of the neighborhood to keep the homes dry. And, since 19th avenue runs uphill, we wonder how they will prevent the water from flowing from 43rd

street to 44th street into the pond, especially considering the huge amounts of water that come from the 43rd street pipe?

The pond at the corner of 44th and 19th will be as high as the lake (up to 814 feet). Currently, this pond is 809 feet. You will be raising the water level by up to 5 feet under normal conditions. This is unacceptable.

Concept C should be a non-starter. The driving range would be in the northwest corner of the property, right across the street from homes and it would be surrounded by water. Who will retrieve golf balls out of the neighborhood and the water, plus how many broken windows will there be?

Concepts A and B will likely still put golf balls into the neighborhood on 43rd street.

The built-in flood resiliency and quicker recovery time means elevating half of the property with fill which will reduce unused (available) flood storage which is necessary to protect the homes in the surrounding neighborhood from a 2014-like flood.

Golfers should be concerned about:

Four holes in Concept B look too close together which is dangerous to golfers. It is reminiscent of the bad redesign at Como Park Golf Course that had 2 holes side by side with the same tee. Golfers' balls were hitting other golfers.

The "18-hole experience" is a joke. Multiple tees and 2 pin placements is totally a poor person's golf course; it does not in any way provide "an 18-hole experience". I guess this is what the Park Board believes the Black community and people in the inner city deserve. I call it "putting lipstick on a pig". Plus, a golfer who maintains an official USGA handicap cannot just willy-nilly pick any tee they want in a round of golf. These golfers must play a specific set of tees rated as a group for the desired difficulty, which likely

means playing the exact same tees twice. I have seen 2 pin placements on a course down south, but it was used to reduce wear and tear on the greens.

It looks like the golf holes are surrounded by massive amounts of water/wetland. This is reminiscent of the original plans put out by the Park Board that went over like a lead balloon (we called them Water World). This is not good for beginners and intermediate golfers. And, this is terrible for a municipal golf course in a mixed income city (lost balls = higher cost to play), not to mention polluting the water and wetland with golf balls!

You say that the golf course will have built in resiliency and a quicker recovery time. The current golf course already has built-in resiliency for many of the high-value items (tees and greens), and there are no buildings on the floodplain. Right now the golf course does not flood until the lake level reaches 815.7 feet. You said that the golf course would be built to an elevation of between 814 and 815 feet. So, the new golf course will flood at a lower lake level (814 to 815 feet) than the current golf course (815.7 feet), which would increase the likelihood that the golf course would flood more often. How is that better? What will the recovery time be in days?

How deep are the driving ranges?

I don't see any practice putting green at the clubhouse for A or C. Every golf course worth its salt has this readily available to golfers before they tee off.

All of these concepts appear to have very little rough on the edges of the holes, meaning little margin for error, thus lost golf balls. My league played a tournament at one metro golf course like this in the 1980's and our league members lost so many golf balls we never went back. One golfer lost 18 golf balls in the swamp. I have also played another golf course in the metro a couple of times, but I avoid playing there unless I have to because of all the water bordering holes. On one hole, I hit my ball into a wetland area that ran all of the way down the hole. When I went over there

to see if I could retrieve my golf ball, I saw ball after ball after ball after ball in this pond (maybe 20-30 golf balls). These designs look very similar and would drastically reduce patronage.

People should look at the effect on the neighborhood:

And, how is this neighborhood going to handle more traffic with another community building? You should do a real traffic study before you put out proposals.

You are adding two new parking lots on the southwest corner of the property in an area that is currently swamped with cars. The only way these will be usable for park patrons is if they are pay lots; but then they will be used about as much as the one on Minnehaha Parkway where Minnehaha Creek passes to the golf course (meaning unused). I guess that is one more way for the Park Board to try and make money so that they can squander it.

Where is the snowmaking infrastructure? They cause noise pollution. You originally had them across the street from the homes on Longfellow and 44th and were criticized. Then, you moved them across from Noko and were criticized. Now, I don't see them? And, it is unclear if you can run pond water in snowmaking machines.

People looking for other activities should notice:

The promises for additional parkland for other activities appears to be a pipe dream. The Hiawatha Golf Course property is 140 acres. The proposed golf course and driving range would use 65-70 acres of the property. Water would occupy 55-60 acres. That leaves 6-14 acres for other activities. So, there will truly be golf and water on the site. Sounds like a bait and switch to all those people who gave their comments about other activities.

Park Board Commissioners, with only 6 to 14 acres of total community recreation, why don't you leave the golf course alone and convert the Nokomis softball fields on Cedar Avenue into all of the things non-golfers want. These fields are rarely used, while the golf course is busy all summer.

For Nordic skiing the golf course is split into sections with the only connection being over bridges.

Boardwalks - really - in a floodplain? Especially, in a flood-plain next to a lake that can change 3 feet under normal conditions, and over 3 feet during flood conditions.

What is a flexible lawn?

Ice fishing is done right now; that is nothing new.

Ice skating can be done at the Hiawatha Park building on 27th avenue when weather supports it. Ice skating on a swamp, especially with climate change, can be very dangerous.

What will be handicap accessible?

People interested in environmental issues should notice:

I ask that you put in a grit chamber on 43rd and 19th, but leave the 43rd St. underground pipe alone. Don't dump stormwater into this park right across the street from the homes, thus violating EPA guidelines for constructed wetlands, which is what this would be since you say you are doing it to reduce pollution. Here are EPA guidelines for Constructed Wetlands:

- The site should be above the water table and not be in a floodplain.
(1)
- The site should contain soils that can be sufficiently compacted to

minimize seepage to groundwater. Although peats are common in natural wetlands, they are not preferred soil for establishing constructed wetlands. (1)

- A large buffer zone should be placed between the wetland and neighboring property. The wetland should not be placed next to the edge of neighboring properties. (1)
- The effectiveness of a constructed wetland in treating wastewater or stormwater is related to the retention time of the water in the wetland. High volumes of water through a wetland reduce the effectiveness of the wetland. (1)

(1) EPA - A Handbook of Constructed Wetlands

The Hiawatha Golf Course violates all of these EPA guidelines. And, if you say that you are not creating a constructed wetland, you are not doing pollution mitigation.

The plan says that it will include Audubon certification. The current Hiawatha 18-hole golf course was already certified by Audubon, but you have let that certification lapse. Why? So, you can make this new proposal look better than the current golf course? Your suburban golf courses are still certified. But, you have let your certifications for your golf courses in the city lapse, that is, Hiawatha and Columbia. It looks like the suburbs are more environmentally important to you than those in the city.

The delta area is an area created from all of the trash, soil and refuse that has come down Minnehaha Creek for the past couple of decades. And it directs all of this poisoned water into the heart of Lake Hiawatha. Why is this delta worth preserving, other than to satisfy the desires of the Friends of Lake Hiawatha? Dredge it!

Using ponds, and thus storm water, for irrigation is nothing new even though you may portray it as new; the current 18-hole golf course already does this! And, what does reducing "water consumption needs" mean? Do you mean less ground to irrigate? If so, the water is free, so this is meaningless!

No public entities, except the Park Board, are concerned with the current pumping since it is harming NOTHING!

Managing and treating storm water should not be the responsibility of Hiawatha golf course, even though the current golf course does do that through its pond system by sequestering the pollution in the ponds, which you will destroy. With this proposed system, all of the waterways that are connected to Lake Hiawatha are now part of Lake Hiawatha. So, you are still dumping water directly into Lake Hiawatha. You are just distributing the pollution along lengthy, narrow portions of the lake which will be cleaned up how? You want to have plants take up the phosphorus pollution, yet, unless the plants are harvested in the fall, the plants crumble and die, and release the phosphorus back into the water. This will be a huge and tricky maintenance task as you found out with the pond system at Lake Nokomis, which you couldn't properly maintain and have given up on.

I believe that there is already a grit chamber under 44th and Longfellow, and any trash that slips through is sequestered in the pond on the 6th hole? If so, now any trash that slips through will be strewn along the new trench that goes to the lake?

These 3 plans are so water intensive. This means that there will be thousands of golf balls in the water. Who is going to retrieve all of these golf balls?

When you dig up all of this dirt to displace it from one portion of the golf course to the other, what kind of pollution are you going to dredge up?

Why is it OK for you to dredge the property and move the dredge spoils to another part of the property, but you have crucified Theodore Wirth for doing the exact same thing? It sounds pretty hypocritical.....

When are you going to do your Environmental Assessment Worksheet?

Other considerations:

Bringing water to the foot of the clubhouse knoll will bring into play setback requirements for any buildings on the clubhouse knoll. How much buildable space will you lose by doing this?

As far as adding habitat for migratory birds, what does the MAC (Metropolitan Airport Commission) say about more waterfowl in their flight paths so close to a major airport?

People interested in the cost should notice:

How much will this cost? The last estimate was from 2019-2020. Six years later you still have no new cost estimates.

CONCEPT A

The ditch with water next to 19th Ave., which will be at the same level as the lake, is dangerous to the homes across the street, since the bottom of the basements will be below the water level of the ditch.

Hole number 3 will now spray golf balls into a different set of homes on 43rd street.

It looks like 8 holes are bordered by water/wetland; not good for beginners and intermediate golfers. And, this is terrible for a municipal golf course in a mixed income city (lost balls = higher cost to play), not to mention polluting the water and wetland with golf balls!

Leave the neighborhood parks alone at 44th and Longfellow & 43rd and

19th.

Bring back the tennis courts at Longfellow and 45th; they were heavily used before they were removed.

Bringing water to the foot of the clubhouse knoll will bring into play setback requirements for any buildings on the clubhouse knoll. How much buildable space will you lose by doing this? Then, how will you support two buildings? I am not even sure that you can support 2 buildings without losing area to setback requirements.

So, for Concept A you will have 4 buildings on or just below the knoll: clubhouse, community building and welcome shack, and boathouse. What is a welcome shack?

You can't build a boathouse on the shore of a water body anymore. If you have one and demolish it, you can't rebuild it. For boathouses, Minnesota requires a 30 foot setback and it must not be constructed on slopes greater than 20%. Maximum size is 250 square feet. Maximum height is 12 feet. Water-oriented Accessory structures can be within 10 feet with a land use permit, but they must meet flood-plain elevation requirements. The proposed structure would appear to be built in the flood plain.

Another parking lot across from Noko which is an area with heavy traffic already?

A 3-hole par 3 course is a waste of space, especially when all 3 holes are bordered by water. And, beginners are the most likely people to play it which will inundate the water with golf balls. Do people have to pay to use it? An extensive practice area, like currently exists, is much more useful.

The path around the lakes may be a little better in protecting pedestrians walking around the lake with the exception of holes 4 and 8 and 9.

For Nordic skiing the golf course is split in two with the only connection

over a bridge.

What is a connecting plaza and outdoor amenities?

Concept B

Put your wetland demonstration area over at the Nokomis ponds where you can demonstrate how NOT TO DO IT!

What is the park/plaza at 19th and 43rd? Why can't you just leave the park as it is?

Why do you need to tear up our park at 44th and Longfellow - just leave it as is. Don't destroy it with all sorts of paths and playground equipment and hardscape and picnic tables. Plus, that area is very vulnerable to sinkholes, so trying to build anything there will be a challenge, at best.

How are you going to fit 2 buildings and a parking lot on the clubhouse knoll large enough to handle increased patronage? You should have done a real parking study before you propose these things (cart before the horse).

Why do you need another park building across from Byerly's on Longfellow? There is already too much traffic there.

You really think that you can build this massive boardwalk trail on a swamp where the water level can fluctuate by 3 feet within normal water levels?

Dock/launch off Minnehaha Parkway - How does this dock makes sense when you already have one on the other side of the lake that has been there for decades. Plus, how would you launch a boat from the dock/sand beach when you would have to get the boat there over a boardwalk that pedestrians are using? And, you already have a place to launch a boat just

outside of the 3rd hole. Leave the current dock and boat launch where they currently are.

Separated parkway with parallel on-street parking - So you are going to undo what was done by a previous Park Board in the 1980's? The parkway used to be separated. Then in the wisdom of the Park Board the road was changed to a two-lane single road and made narrower which wreaked havoc with driving in the winter. Now, you want to separate the road again and widen it. This is why people's taxes keep going up due to the whims of politicians and city planners.

You are leaving the hill of the 11th green; it will now become an unusable, marshy island?

You are really going to build an outlook/tower right on the edge of a swamp? I know that it would likely be on the 13th tee, but why do we need this? Who will monitor and maintain this, and is it enclosed so that it is not dangerous in the winter (icey stairs)? Do it on parkland, not the golf course, or just don't do it at all.

You already have an executive course at Fort Snelling. Fix that course. Don't build another short course at the expense of a larger practice area.

Only 1 hole (#5) does not have water or swamp next to it. Not good for beginners and intermediate golfers.

Hole number 5 will put golf balls into the neighborhood.

It looks like holes 1 & 2, 4 & 5, and 3 & 6 & 7 & 9 share rough and sand traps. It looks rather dangerous. Also, 6 looks like it is coming right back at the 3rd tee. Same with 9 & 7. Dangerous.

For holes 1 and 2, it looks like after finishing hole 1 you will have to walk back into the line of fire on hole 1 to get to the second tee. DANGEROUS!

Water at the corner of 44th and 19th will be as high as the lake (up to 814 feet). Currently, this pond is 809 feet. You will be raising the water level by up to 5 feet under normal conditions. This is unacceptable.

You can create more habitat for pollinators, amphibians and such on the 18-hole golf course.

What is the connecting plaza and outdoor amenities?

5 acres of parks is not all new area; you are usurping the prized neighborhood parks on the northwest side of the golf course, so you can't count that as something new, especially when the neighborhood wants you to leave them alone.

Concept C

Concept C should be a non-starter. The driving range would be in the northwest corner of the property, right across the street from homes and it would be surrounded by water. Who will retrieve golf balls out of the water and the neighborhood, plus how many broken windows will there be? This will be a liability for the golf course since this configuration would have been done after the homes were built.

The golf course holes are surrounded by massive amounts of water, reminiscent of the original plans put out by the Park Board that went over like a lead balloon (we called them Water World). This much water is totally inappropriate for beginning and intermediate golfers (your target audience). And, this is terrible for a municipal golf course in a mixed income city (lost balls = higher cost to play), plus, the amount of balls in the water would be immense. Who will clean them out?

Water right across the street from 19th Ave at the same level as the lake is dangerous to the homes there.

The neighborhood will now lose their park on 44th and Longfellow to the golf course along with hearing the click all day long of clubs hitting golf balls, not to mention golf balls ending up in the yards of homes. Driving ranges do not belong across the street from homes.

And, we need another park building on Longfellow Ave, why?

How is the stormwater treated before it enters the current lake?

The built-in flood resiliency and quicker recovery time (elevating the golf course) is at the expense of unused flood storage which is necessary to protect the surrounding neighborhood during the next big flood.

So, with a boardwalk connection around the lake, how are non-golfers going to be protected from flying golf balls on holes 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8?

How are you going to fit 2 buildings on this small knoll, especially with 3 bodies of water that appear to come to the base of the knoll, which would require a larger setback requirement than the current clubhouse? Or will they both be tiny buildings like what was built at Meadowbrook?

And, how is this neighborhood going to handle more traffic with another community building? You should do a real traffic study before you put out proposals.

For Nordic trails, the major areas of the golf course are segregated such that the only way to get from one to another is over bridges.

Minnehaha Creek is still blocked by the delta and the water is still directed into the lake, thus still putting all of the trash and pollution into the main part of the lake. When Rep. Jean Wagenius first saw the intention of the Park Board to remeander the creek on the golf course property to reduce pollution she said, "Well, that won't do anything." She is considered one of the premier environmentalists in the state. So, if she said it wasn't worth

doing, it wasn't worth doing, especially at a cost of tens of millions of dollars.

You are adding two new parking lots on the southwest corner of the property in an area that is currently swamped with cars. The only way these will be usable for park patrons is if they are pay lots; but then they will be used about as much as the one on Minnehaha Parkway where Minnehaha Creek passes to the golf course (meaning unused). I have seen non-golfers park in the golf course parking lot and take off on their bikes; I'm guessing that this was because the golf course parking lot was free and they needed to pay at the parking lot on Minnehaha Parkway. Plus, you are putting more hardscape right near the creek.

Boardwalks - really - in a floodplain? Especially, in a flood-plain next to a lake that can change 3 feet under normal conditions.