

Hiawatha Links Public Meeting - Assessment

The following represents one person's assessment of the Hiawatha Links presentation given on January 16th by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board at the Nokomis Community Center. The page numbers reference the presentation boards as shown in the following PDF document:

<https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/All-Phase-1-Boards-SM.pdf>

p. 3 - You say that Indigenous people in the area feel invisible and forgotten by many. That could also be said of the Black community and the Hispanic community and many others. There are many people who live together in the City of Minneapolis, and many of them golf at Hiawatha and other Minneapolis golf courses. The Park Board needs to be inclusive and responsive to all.

p. 3 - The wall that was built around Lake Hiawatha was a WPA project that employed unskilled workers during the Depression and provided important jobs that kept people employed. This type of wall was built all over the Park System, and there still is an important wall by the Hiawatha Park Building that keeps that building from falling into the lake.

p. 3 - 1965 and 1987 floods caused minimal damage to the golf course and the golf course was reopened in a short amount of time. After the 2014 flood, the golf course could have been brought back in a short time also if the Park Board hadn't tried to get FEMA money which was never used to repair Hiawatha Golf Course. The 18-hole golf course is already designed for minimal damage to the property with elevated tees and greens.

p. 3 - You fail to mention that Tiger Woods dedicated the enhanced driving range and practice area which would be destroyed with the plan.

p. 3 - Remember, trash does not come from the golf course; it comes from the city storm sewers that dump directly into Lake Hiawatha and Minnehaha Creek. And, it needs to be dealt with by the cities. It is not a golf course problem.

p. 3 - Those 2021 pumping volumes kept homes dry. Also, in 2017 pumping volume increased dramatically while rainfall went down. This defies common sense. But, we found that the pumping regime with the 2 main pumps was changed. Before that one pump was used as a main pump and the other was used sparingly as a backup. Starting in 2017 both pumps were run simultaneously. Since much of the water that is being pumped comes from Lake Hiawatha (and is just pumped in a circle) we believe that the increase was likely due to pulling more lake water into the golf course and then pumping it back out, a procedural issue, not a golf course problem. Plus, in 2012 more water was directed to the golf course by the City of Minneapolis (estimated at 25% of the water now being pumped out of the golf course). This is conveniently left out of

the conversation by the Park Board.

p. 3 - The presentation says, the plan includes: "improving water management at the site while providing opportunities to address flooding in the watershed to the north." The plan, so far, shows no ways that it will improve water management at the site since the problems are watershed issues, not golf course issues. Also, improving flooding to the north appears to be the same old solution that the City of Minneapolis has used for over 50 years; send more water to Lake Hiawatha which solves nothing, but does unfairly burden the Hiawatha neighborhood with more and more water. The City needs to build proper infrastructure to handle increases in water; not just direct it to an already over-burdened Lake Hiawatha.

p. 4 - The presentation says it includes: "Reutilizing pumped water for a variety of potential uses (e.g. irrigation, snowmaking, facility heating/cooling). The current golf course already uses pumped water for irrigation, so that is nothing new. It is unclear if you can use pumped (dirty) water for snowmaking; Theodore Wirth golf course uses well water for snow-making which is clean water. Also, it unclear if pumped (dirty) water can be used for heating/cooling. Will it clog the equipment?"

p. 4 & p. 8 - The presentation says it includes: "Relocating an improved and reduce pumping strategy at the site to protect nearby low basements from groundwater intrusion to the same degree they are protected today." Three independent hydrologists have expressed concern about this plan and whether it will work. Also, Commissioner Bourn specifically asked MPRB Assistant Superintendent of Planning about needing to do reduced pumping. He said, Is it true that nobody is making the Park Board do reduced pumping. If we are doing it, it is because we want to? Michael Schroeder responded, "Yes." Also, on another presentation board it is stated that the plan will "address potential impacts to nearby properties resulting from changes to pumping by installing a more localized pump or nearby resident sump pumps." Installing sump pumps into homes means that the MPRB expects water intrusion into the homes which violates their statement of protecting homes to the same level as today. Our home has never had water intrusion and we have owned it for over 50 years.

p. 4 - The presentation says it includes: "Improving water quality in Lake Hiawatha and Minnehaha Creek." 99% of the pollution and trash comes from Minnehaha Creek and storm sewers that dump directly into Lake Hiawatha. Destroying the golf course may eliminate 1% of the pollution. And, 25% of the pumped water comes from storm water that is dumped into the pond system on the golf course. The pond system cleans this storm water before it is pumped into Lake Hiawatha. This plan would destroy the pond system on the golf course and it is unclear where this water would go and how it would be cleaned to the level it is today.

p.4 - The presentation says it includes: "Creating a destination golf facility focused on learning the sport and increasing opportunities for new players, including a 9-hole golf course, driving range, and practice facilities." The current golf course already provides this within the context of

an 18-hole golf course and large driving range. The proposal would dramatically diminish the usability of this property for golf, including for learning by new players.

p. 4 - The presentation says it includes: "Celebrating the history of Black golfers at the course and supporting and providing an introduction to golf for people of color." Maybe you should ask the Black community how they want their history celebrated, because it isn't by getting rid of the 18-hole golf course.

p. 4 - The presentation says it includes: "Expanding access to the site with bicycle and pedestrian trails, a reenvisioned clubhouse area that welcomes the larger community." There isn't enough property there for a 9-hole golf course and all of these bike and pedestrian trails. Also, there isn't room on the clubhouse knoll for a grandiose restaurant, nor enough parking capacity in the neighborhood.

p. 4 - The presentation says it includes: "Restoring ecological function through the creation of wetlands, riparian and shoreline restorations, upland prairie restoration, and protecting existing wildlife habitat." This can be done with the 18-hole golf course within parameters governing inner city neighborhoods. Also, Audubon Certification of Golf Courses parameters can be used to a greater extent on the 18-hole golf course to attain these goals. Another question is, who are you really doing this for? To clean up all of the garbage and pollution visited on this neighborhood by the City of Minneapolis and other communities?

p. 4 - The presentation says it includes: "Creating a South Minneapolis winter recreation destination complementary to North Minneapolis's Theodore Wirth Park." Using snowguns across the street from residential areas is a big problem with making snow due to noise. It will, most likely, violate Minnesota state noise statutes. Also, snow-making is considered a negative with respect to climate change.

p. 4 - The presentation says it includes: "Developing nine experiences that tell the cultural and natural history through permanent elements and infrastructure, as well as through art, performance, community events, and ephemeral experiences." Pretty statement. What does this really mean?

p. 5 Issues we see with the plan:

- Storm sewer diversion at the corner of 43rd St and 19th Ave violates EPA guidelines for pollution mitigation by doing it near other properties, that is, homes. Example: gasoline fire in sewer in 1964 where burning fuel went into the lake via the 43rd street pipe by the golf course. The new plan would put this fire right across the street from homes, which is why the EPA says don't put pollution mitigation near homes.
- Multi-use paved trails would be totally dangerous next to holes 1 and 4 due to flying golf balls. Also, with a natural surface trail near 4th green and 6th hole. And, the path

along Longfellow and 19th by the 5th green and hole 2 and hole 3 would be dangerous.

- The park at the corner of 44th and Longfellow Ave will not be usable because the 5th hole will fill it with flying golf balls. Before the ponds were put in on the golf course next to this park, the park was always full of golf balls. The pond forced golfers to redirect their path away from the park due to the risk of losing the golf balls in the pond. The proposed layout loses that protection.
- Golf cart path from 4th green to 5th tee - For one, it is half a mile long which is ridiculous. Plus, it puts these golfers in direct aim of golfers hitting on hole 2 and hole 1 (dangerous).
- The plan says there will be "enhanced practice areas". With less space, how is that possible. What does enhanced mean?
- Of course, the most important thing about this diagram is that it is being thrown out, so we don't really know what we are talking about (another waste of time for public vetting).!!!!
- At what time of the day and night will the residents on Longfellow and 44th hear water pumps running?
- Bringing water to the base of the clubhouse knoll will bring in shoreline building restrictions (set-backs) making the usable space for building on the knoll less than it is today, which is already pretty limited.
- Having a snowmaking and distribution system right across from the street from a 5 story apartment building at Longfellow and Minnehaha Parkway would likely violate state noise regulations, especially considering that noise like this is more problematic the higher the residential building is.
- The north shore - A dock and boat storage already exist just a few hundred yards away in the park area. And, there is a boat launch right now just outside of the golf course (a few feet away). Also, there is a lot of passive, open space a few hundred yards away by the current park building. None of this needs to be duplicated!
- Natural surface trail - This is on the old berm which the Park Board said was dangerous and could fall apart at any time and drown golfers. Now it is proposed as a public path. Really???
- Observation tower - This could be built right now on the decrepit tennis court which is in disrepair just outside of the golf course.

P. 6 Clarifications of information presented on this presentation board

- The concrete weir at the outlet is mentioned. It is non-functional and should be removed, possibly allowing the lake level to be lower, which would alleviate the golf course level of pumping.
- Some water flows naturally into the golf course from the neighborhood due to gravity. It is not all pumped.
- Storm water piped into the golf course ponds was dramatically increased, intentionally, in

2011-2012, and now accounts for about 25% of the water pumped out on the other side.

- The berm was overtopped in 2014 because the MCWD lost control of the release of water from their dam at Lake Minnetonka. They almost overtopped the dam this year, apparently because they decided not to release water until May 1st, thus building up 6 inches of rainfall in Lake Minnetonka, and then the rains came. And, we have found that the dam has overtopped 8 years out of the past 24 years, which puts into question the viability of the dam to protect the lower watershed.
- You question the viability of the golf course pumps. No pump is large enough to handle an event like the 2014 flood. The water in the upper watershed needs to be controlled by the upper watershed, not the lower watershed. This is required by the Met Council equity guidelines (even though they gave the Park Board an exemption) and the Minnesota Climate Change Action Plan.
- The seepage of water from the lake into the golf course can be mitigated by lowering the lake level of Lake Hiawatha, in particular, by dredging and removing impediments in the outbound creek which the Park Board has refused to consider.
- More and more water has been directed to Lake Hiawatha over the past 50 years by the City of Minneapolis and the communities upstream. This has caused more and more water problems for this park. It is time to quit using this park and neighborhood as the dumping ground (toilet bowl) for the whole watershed.

p. 7 - The Lake Hiawatha minimum water level is not 810.1 feet. It is about 811 feet. In monitoring the lake level over the past 8 years, I have never seen the lake level below 811 feet. This level is currently controlled by the level of the outbound creek. Also, it needs to be mentioned that the lake levels of Lake Hiawatha are never natural; they are totally managed by the MCWD.

p. 8 - Climate change is causing problems for the whole watershed, and the solutions need to be borne by the whole watershed. But, we have seen little proposed change with respect to WATER QUANTITY in the watershed. The solutions are just to hold the water temporarily and then send it on down to the lower watershed. Equity guidelines for climate change say that NO community should bear the full burden of climate change. Lake Hiawatha is currently bearing the full burden of climate change. This change violates Met Council and State equity guidelines by destroying a neighborhood/community asset just so other areas can continue to get rid of THEIR water.

p. 8 - Continual pumping IS a viable long-term option for the golf course. The MPRB is the only organization that has said it is not. The long-term solution is to stop dumping huge quantities of water into this neighborhood; instead, mitigate it elsewhere.

p. 8 - The presentation says that the plan will "Offset floodplain fill with an equal amount of storage at approximately the same elevation" to create the new 9-hole golf course.

- On one hand, the MPRB has consistently criticized Theodore Wirth for doing this on the golf course property in building the original golf course. Now, it is, apparently, OK for the MPRB to do this?
- Also, digging parts of the golf course deeper and dumping the dirt onto another part of the golf course to elevate it may not change the "total" flood storage of the property. But, it does change the "available" flood storage on the property which is critical to the protection of the homes. This is because the hole created will be filled with water and thus will not be **available** to take on flood waters. Plus, all of the current golf course property would be filled with either fill or water up to the level of the lake. In some places that is up to 5 feet of **available** flood storage lost (permanently filled) from the currently empty golf course.

p. 8 - The plan says: "Elevate water-sensitive features (tee boxes, greens, structures) to limit flood risk." and " Maintain vertical separation between the playable surface and water table." The first statement is an absurd statement. The whole golf course needs to be elevated above the level of the lake, not just sensitive features. Plus, the current golf course already elevates many tees and greens to limit flood damage. These features can be seen in the aerial flood photos. If the second statement is implemented, the first statement is a moot point, and does not need to be done, so why make both statements?

p. 8 - It says "Provide stormwater storage to not increase flows to Lake Hiawatha." What does this statement even mean??? Where? What happens to this water?

p. 8 - It says "Utilize water storage areas for potential wetland restoration and stormwater best management practices to improve the quality of water flowing to Lake Hiawatha." The water flowing into Lake Hiawatha should be clean, and not the responsibility of Lake Hiawatha to clean up. This is in all environmental equity guidelines that we have seen. This should all be done without any needed changes to Lake Hiawatha and the golf course since they are not the problem; they are the victim. And, Best Management practices state that pollution mitigation should be done at the source, not the destination!

p. 8 - "Design recreation use areas to drain via surface flow paths and piping." This sounds like it is all going directly into the lake, just like the sewer systems that the MPRB is complaining about.

p. 8 - "Include a trash capture device upstream of Lake Hiawatha." This can be done without any changes to the golf course. In fact, it has already been done where the 43rd street pipe enters Lake Hiawatha. Plus, every community that dumps water into Minnehaha Creek needs to do this at their outfalls.

p. 8 - "Offset any new impervious areas with stormwater storage and water quality treatment." This should be done throughout the whole watershed, not just on the golf course property.

p. 8 - "Design site features for a condition with an increased groundwater level similar to the lake." This is totally irresponsible, and frightening for the nearby homes in that any water near the homes could be as high as the current high level of the lake (814 feet). This lake level can last for months in a high precipitation year. And, this lake level is higher than some basements of at-risk homes. This would, absolutely, be unsustainable for the homes.

p. 8 - "Address potential impacts to nearby properties resulting from changes to pumping by installing a more localized pump or nearby resident sump pumps." So, the MPRB is backing out of its promise to protect the homes to the level currently protected if they are saying that they now expect the homes to need sump pumps.

p. 9 - How are you going to protect the endangered species on the golf course property with your massive plan to dredge and fill?

p. 9 - The photo looking northeast of Cedar Ave and Minnehaha Creek is now occupied by the mortuary, a coffee shop and ice cream shop, and a 5 story apartment building with grocery store. So, why is all of that permitted and an 18-hole golf course is not?

p. 10 - The golf course "changes had a dramatic impact on the sites ecology. Lake Hiawatha currently deals with high levels of phosphorus, bacteria, and trash pollution, along with invasive species like zebra mussel." This pollution does not come from the golf course. It comes from upstream communities that don't send clean water to Lake Hiawatha. Quit making it sound like the golf course is the polluter.

p. 11 - The presentation says, "Within the golf course boundary, Minnehaha Creek has steep banks dominated by reed canary grass and an open tree canopy. South of the golf course, the creek is more shaded with gradually sloping, rip-rap reinforced banks." So, the golf course banks are more natural than the banks south (east?) of the golf course. Rip-rap is not natural; it is used to stabilize banks. Why do these banks need to be stabilized? Also, the tree canopy on the golf course used to be much larger, but over the past 30 years the Park Board has not replanted trees that have died or had to be removed. So, the tree canopy on the golf course has been intentionally decimated by lack of attention by the MPRB. How many trees could have been planted on Hiawatha Golf Course with the \$1 million spent on this plan over the past 10 years?

p. 11 - "The flow of water through the creek and into Lake Hiawatha is regulated and controlled upstream at Gray's Bay Dam." We are finding that this is only partially true. There are few controls of water entering Minnehaha Creek below Grey's Bay Dam. It appears that the 1987 flood is a case in point. Lake Minnetonka lake levels indicated that there was little change from the 1987 rainstorm in Lake Minnetonka levels. This seems to indicate that the rainstorm went to the east of Lake Minnetonka and inundated the lower watershed. Thus, the lower watershed is very vulnerable to high rainfalls because of a lack of controls.

p. 11 - The presentation says, "The forested floodplain area in the southeast corner of the delta included many tree species such as ash, silver maple, American elm, and invasive mulberry." Invasive species are present in the delta because it has not been dredged in decades like in the past. And, the MPRB and MCWD have shown that they aren't capable of maintaining these areas (reference the ponds at Lake Nokomis which were never maintained and have now been intentionally abandoned with respect to maintenance).

p. 11 - The presentation says, "Lake Hiawatha is rich in biodiversity and is home to many species, including beaver, muskrat, otter, mink, soft shelled snapper, painted turtles, great horned owl, eagle, osprey, kingfisher, great blue heron and more. It is also a key stop for a great diversity of birds migrating along the Mississippi River corridor." What will happen to all of these animals and birds when you tear up the golf course property to build this new plan?

p. 11 - The presentation says, "Endangered, threatened, and candidate species that may be present in the project area include the northern long-eared bat, tricolored bat, Whooping Crane, Higgin's eye, salamander mussel, monarch butterfly, and the rusty patched bumble bee." Again, the plan would totally destroy the habitat on the golf course during construction. How do you possibly protect these species, or will you destroy their habitat and then try to re-introduce them?

p. 12 - "Daylight the 43rd St. stormwater pipe." This violates EPA guidelines for pollution mitigation that says, do not do pollution mitigation near any other properties.

p. 12 - "Use interceptors and forebays to capture sediment and trash." According to EPA guidelines for constructed wetlands, these are very complex systems and need to be diligently maintained. The MPRB and MCWD have not been able to manage a much smaller system at Lake Nokomis and have given up on it. Plus, EPA guidelines state that these systems should not be done on floodplains or in wetlands that have a high throughput of water. Lake Hiawatha is both of these, and therefore not a good candidate for this type of system.

p. 12 - "Position features for easy maintenance, ensuring access and resilient vegetation." Vegetation in these systems needs to be cleaned out and replanted periodically. Again, the MPRB and MCWD have not been good maintainers of Park Board systems, and they have given up on maintaining the Lake Nokomis ponds which are a failed, miniature version of this proposal.

p. 12 - "Provide a diversity of wetland types & uses to align with hydrological & ecological functions." What does this possibly mean?

p. 12 - "Recognize that wetlands play multiple roles - stormwater treatment, flood reduction, and high-quality habitat - and design each wetland with a clear purpose in mind." You have one

wetland that is stated to be connected.

p. 12 - "Make wetlands a hydrologically connected complex, providing diversity in types and habitats to optimize functionality and ecosystem services." This appears to be a meaningless statement to sound important.

p. 12 - "Design wetland shapes to blend into the park's natural setting, and if constraints require geometric shapes, use grading and plantings outside the wetland to integrate them with the landscape." We are in the middle of a urban area with a multitude of buildings and transportation infrastructure. Plus, the City of Minneapolis is bent on building more and more high-density housing. There is no way natural systems can handle this type of development.

p. 12 - "Use native vegetation that can tolerate changing hydrological conditions and poor water quality to ensure resilience." Best Management Practice requires that pollution be mitigated at the source, not the destination. The Lake Hiawatha neighborhood should not be the cess pool for the whole watershed to dump and clean their pollution.

p. 12 - "Plan for future maintenance, including sediment removal, while balancing investment in vegetation that minimizes upkeep." There are a lot of dreams/delusions/fantasy in these statements.

p. 12 - "Prioritize native vegetation for upland and wetland restoration, emphasizing ecological function, resilience, and integration with recreational uses." This was a goal of the Nokomis ponds and the MPRB and MCWD failed there. Some goals listed can be done on the current 18-hole golf course. Yet, other goals have failed elsewhere in the park system. This is especially true for keeping out invasive species, since Lake Hiawatha receives a massive amount of water and debris from ~95% of the watershed. It would be a constant battle for maintenance; again, do it at the source, not the destination.

p. 12 - "Employ practices like prescribed fire or rotational mowing." "Infrastructure should accommodate natural disturbances like fire and grazing to support biodiversity." You want to do prescribed burns in an urban neighborhood with homes right across the street????? This is insane. Look at California!!!!

p. 12 - "Focus: Establish continuous, connected habitats that support wildlife movement, reduce fragmentation, and create diverse, functioning ecosystems." This can be done on the 18-hole golf course and is a feature of the Audubon Certification for Golf Courses.

p. 12 - "Incorporate downed logs, brush piles, and rock formations to provide overwintering, nesting, and hiding places for invertebrates, small mammals, and reptiles." I picked one of the concerning statements in the Fauna/Habitat Connectivity section for a reply. Leaving, or actually building, refuse on the property like brush piles does at least a couple of things. Lake Hiawatha

takes on all of the shedding of water in the watershed above it. That water needs to readily move through the waterway to avoid flooding of the neighborhoods. Putting impediments in the way to slow down flow will only back-up water into these neighborhoods, a very negative consequence. Also, having brush piles and dead logs strewn on the property creates fuel for fire. We see the consequences of this in California where they have large areas full of natural fuel just ready to be consumed by fire. This thinking is totally unacceptable in an urban environment. These ideas may sound OK on paper, but they are absolutely not practical in an urban environment.

pp. 13-14 - The public has been asked, ad naseum, what they want on this property for golf, and the public has responded. Every time we have seen the results, the majority has stated that they want an 18-hole golf course. Quit wasting golf money asking people what they want. Do think that the answer will change?

pp. 15 -17 - There is no point in showing sample 9-hole layouts to golfers who want 18 holes.

pp. 18-19 - The 18-hole golf course already has an extensive practice and learning facility. You have asked, ad naseam, what golfers want, and they have responded that they want what they already have. They don't want a pared down version of what they have. Plus, everything indicates that you are not interested in supporting the average or experienced golfer; only, beginners and casual golfers with a substandard golf course which you already have at Fort Snelling. What a waste of money.

pp. 20-25 - You have 6 boards for "Extended Golf Experiences" on the property, another term for non-golf activities. As I explained to the person at this station, the Park Board has asked the public, ad naseam, what they want on this property over the past 8 years. How much time and money has been spent with no conclusions. Maybe it is because you just want to string out this job for as long as possible?

Activities (15)

Foot golf - 1

Workout Facilities/Fitness/Yoga/Classes - 3

Disc Golf - 1

Lawn Games - 1

Sledding Hill - 1

Curling - 1

Cross Country Skiing - 1

Ice Skating - 1

Maple Sugaring - 1

Cycling Trails - 1

Accessible Walking Trails, Natural Informal Trails/Raised Boardwalks - 3

Fishing - 1

Dining-Food (13)

Restaurant/Restuarant and Bar /Indoor Dining/Walk-up Food and Drink Window/Banquet Hall/Banquet Space /Bar/Bar Amenities/Coffee Bar - 9

Outdoor Dining - 2

Outdoor Patio/ Dog Friendly Patio - 2

Social (18)

Large/Informal/Large/Indoor Play Area - 4

Picnic Area - 1

Hammocking Area - 1

On-Ice Art and Events/Public Art - 2

Indoor Lounge Space/Ourdoor Lounge Space - 2

Meeting Rooms/Community Rooms/Multi-purpose Classrooms - 3

Outdoor Fire Pits/Indoor Fireplace - 3

Large Decks - 1

Overlook - 1

Lake Activities (2)

Destination/Accessible/Informal Water Access - 3

Canoe, Kayak, Paddle Boarding - 1

Nature (3)

Bird Blind - 1

Ecological/Environmental Information - 2

Retail (6)

Bike Repair Shop - 1

Retail Space - 1

Ski Rental - 1

Ice Skate Rental - 1

Canoe/Kayak Rental - 1

Informal Lockers - 1

Golf (9)

Practice Facilities - 1

Simulator Facilities/Indoor Simulator - 3

Golf Club Rentals - 1

Putting Course - 1

19th Hole Experience - 1

Golf equipment rentals - 1

Golf training - 1

