

Item 25-0979: Approve Veterans Park Renaming Process

Parks and Recreation Committee

Mon, Aug 25, 2025 6:00PM

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 01:31

We have no public hearings or appearances on the agenda on the agenda. So tonight, we'll move straight into the action items, and let's start with 25-0979, approve veterans park renaming process. All in favor—or?

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 01:56

Move to approve

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 01:57

Second.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 01:59

Are there any comments or questions? Yes, Katie.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 02:06

I'll just add that I—looking this over, I appreciate the emphasis on the public engagement. I think that's really important. And I did have a question, if that's okay. I'm just wondering if, beyond Lundgaard Park, do you know the last park naming process that we went through?

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 02:33

Deputy Director Flick? This is—what is yours?

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 02:36

District One or Director One? Director One. Sorry.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 02:41

Director one.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 02:43

The last process was Ellen Kort Peace Park.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 02:48

Okay, so fairly recent.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 02:50

Yes.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 02:51

None.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 02:51

Great. And has anything changed much from this process that we learned from the Ellen Kort Peace Park?

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 02:52

Okay. Thank you,

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 02:55

Alex.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 02:57

Thank you, Chair. Just a quick question. The—in our attachment was the policy, park naming policy, does specify the naming of a newly acquired part should conform to one or more criteria. I assume this is not necessarily the same thing, because we're renaming a park under some special circumstances. Do you feel like there's any room for latitude on what's been applied as the park naming conventions?

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 03:28

No, I would just say that the policy should be updated to refer to new or older, past or present or—

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 03:35

Okay.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 03:35

Because, yes, that is an outdated language for the process that we're going through with this park example. So, unless you just want to add something that says, you know, this is a current existing park to follow the existing policy in place.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 03:51

Thank you. Just to follow up. I asked the question because there was a couple park names that have been floated which wouldn't necessarily fit under these guidelines. So, I'm hoping they'd be considered even though they might not fit these guidelines.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 04:03

I don't see any reason.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 04:04

Okay.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 04:04

I mean, there has to...must be some special names if it didn't fall under **[motions to policy]**.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 04:10

If I could follow up on Alder Schultz, like, for example, there was, this was a—we might have been looking at the same page where people were kind of brainstorming about park names, but like Pride Park. There's possibility that people would put forward parks that represent more of an idea. Even Veterans Memorial doesn't strike me as fitting within these categories. So—and I do think it would be important that we have some sense of what the ground rules are for the names. For example, it can't be a figure who is—it needs—who is living. It's a figure that is deceased, unless it's a donor, I guess. What are—would a name that represents an idea or a concept be something that would fit that we could—that could be considered?

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 05:05

So, it's not specifically called out in the policy to do so. It's probably not within in my rights to change the policy to say "Yes we could." But I think if you made a motion to have that considered in the reviewing policy or the reviewing process with the city and staff, I think that would be appropriate. I don't know if you have any comment or not, Chris, but I'm not at will, I would say, to change the policy, but—

Attorney Christopher Behrens 05:39

The item on the agenda is approving a process. It's not noted as taking up the Naming Parklands Policy itself. So—and I note that attached to the agenda is a renaming process that's outlined. So, it's my understanding that that's what you're voting on tonight, but the policy is there to guide the process.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 06:09

Does the—on the—I take that, thank you. Attorney Behrens—and I think that's a really important point. On the renaming process, I do believe I remember it saying that it will be done in accordance with the naming of public lands policy. I'm looking for that on here. "Compliance with naming guidelines."

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 06:32

Yes, that's included in the packet. It's the naming of Public Parklands Policy.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 06:37

Right.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 06:38

There's six listed—

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 06:40

Right.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 06:41

—items within there to follow.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 06:43

Right. Could—I guess I'm—you know, I am interested in making sure that some names that people would come up with could fit in here even if it's not—doesn't technically fit in here. But I also—and I, I think—but I also, at the same time, think it's important that we have some limits on what we would consider and what would be the types of names that we would propose.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 07:12

If I could just add, because we want to stay within the policy as we see here, I guess when I think of an idea, perhaps there is something in the neighborhood or in the makeup of the community of that neighborhood, that if they were behind an idea like that it could fit under the neighborhood requirements. There's a listing here. The surrounding neighborhood comprises a significant portion of the service area. You know, if there's something that is—harkens to a community idea represented by the neighborhood, I think that might be possible.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 08:04

Okay. Any, any, any...?

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 08:07

I guess I'd like to motion to allow for consideration of ideas that don't meet the six criteria and allow staff and Council and anybody else to consider those even though they may not fit into the criteria.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 08:21

Could we offer an amendment following Alder Schultz's idea, so in that recommended naming guidelines, "Name shall comply with the existing naming of public—naming a Public Land Policy." Can make—add an amendment to that that we would also consider things and ideas and concepts that don't technically fall in line with what is in the...

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 08:52

I guess that's my motion. That's my motion.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 08:54

In short. Need a second though.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 08:54

Okay.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 08:55

Okay. I second that motion.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 09:04

Discussion?

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 09:05

I'm sorry, could you just clarify this one more time?

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 09:10

Just allow for consideration of proposed names that don't fit within the six stated guideline or criteria of the park naming guidelines.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 09:22

If I could ask a question of Deputy Director Flick. As far as—as this policy exists, I see adopting a process as in August, which is the 25th of August, right now. Is there room to hold this over for discussion as far as actually changing the policy or ensuring that if we add any requirements that the Parks and Recreation Department would be in favor, or would be able to offer some feedback on them.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 10:06

So, our department's, I guess, preference, would be to stick with the outline that we have in front of you. Yes, we're a little delayed with the August timeline, but I feel we can make that up throughout the next two, three months. As for changing the policy, that would that would take a while. We'd have to—that'd be like September 8 come to committee, middle of September could possibly come back to council, you know, and then we come back for this process to start over again in the beginning of October. So, our department's opinion and preference would be to stick with the timeline that we have. The motion taking into consideration of other names, I don't see any issues with that, and we'd like to stick with the timeline.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 11:00

Do—we still have the amendment on the floor, and my understanding is with Alder Schultz's amendment that would add here to the renaming process, these guidelines, just to kind of verb—you know, explicitly open it up that these—the naming of parks document will be our guide, but we are also open to (I think this is what you're saying) we are also open to positive comments and ideas that reflect well on our community as a whole. Something like that, that just gives us a little more leeway. If someone—so that, if someone said we already have a Peace Park or Pride Park, or, you know, Strength—I just think those are words that should be in the running and technically would be off limits by this document.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 11:52

Once you're ready, I just want to clarify some things about the amendment.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 11:55

Sure.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 11:56

I have Alderson Schultz making the motion to amend, but I did not catch who seconded that.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 12:02

That was me.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 12:03

And then what I have is, in addition to what's been proposed by staff, "also consider ideas and concepts that don't technically fall within the Naming of Parklands Policy."

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 12:16

I think that covers it.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 12:19

That covers it. If—are there any other comments or questions?

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 12:26

If I could just ask again. During the Ellen Kort Peace Park naming process, were there items received similar to some of the examples that my colleagues have given, and where those—were Council able to see those types of ideas, or were they very strict to the naming policy?

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 12:53

I don't recall any of those examples brought forward in the Ellen Kort process. When Ellen Kort was brought forward, I'll just say it was a slam dunk. There was—

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 13:02

Okay.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 13:04

There wasn't a lot of conversation, discussion. It—I would say it grabbed community support and the ball rolling, and it just went right through committee and Council pretty fast with the support for her and everything that she's done for our community.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 13:19

If—I'll just say, I feel uncomfortable about having to make a change on the policy on the spot. I'm interested in hearing more about the other types of naming opportunities, but I am concerned about not being fair in treating this renaming if we didn't allow those options previously. So, I guess maybe what I would suggest something that might be workable would be there to be some sort of quarantine of those types of names. And perhaps—I guess I feel like parks and recreation department needs to have some sort of—if they're not following a policy, they have to have some sort of guidelines to follow. I'm concerned about how we could quarantine these "idea" names without—without removing the opportunity to perhaps get rid of some that might be silly if that makes sense, and without being able to ask the department for more feedback on that, I struggle to be okay with the amendment.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 14:43

I don't—if anyone else would like to maybe add some more, and then I can keep my brain going to see if there's a way that we can make that workable. I hear what my colleagues are saying, and I'm appreciative. I'm just trying to figure out how we make that doable.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 15:01

I mean, Chair?

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 15:03

Yeah, do you want to?

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 15:04

Sure. I mean, I was the one to introduce the Ellen Kort Peace Park name proposal. And I, as you suggest Director Flick Deputy that there wasn't really any conflict at that time with the inconclusion of "peace" in it, probably because Ellen Kort was part of the naming convention. If it was just the Peace Park, maybe there would have been some deeper conversations at that time. So, I mean, you could do the same thing, essentially with this park. It could be a name and "pride" something, something "Pride Park." It could be a combination. But I don't feel like we want to make that a necessary element, if those are the proposals that come forward.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 15:43

I am fully confident that a review by Parks and Rec is going to sift through the silliness that might surface, and, again, it's going to come before this committee and then go before council. So, I don't—I don't really have a fear that we're going to find ourselves considering some really wild park names, but I do just want to—because there have been—I've already—there's one—there's another one that I have heard and floated as well that aren't specific to an individual, but do speak to the direction of the community and inclusion and those sorts of things. So that's all I'm trying to do. I want to make sure that they're not just dismissed outright, that there's some opportunity to consider them, and you're going to weigh them against the policy, obviously, and maybe there's a better—maybe there's a better name that is historical in nature, or something nature. So, I think as long as we're confident that Park and Rec, you know, has the wherewithal to vet these things and sieve through them, and then also this committee and Council will do the same thing, I don't really have a fear for the amendment that was proposed.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 16:42

Does that mean you're—are you still in favor of the amendment?

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 16:45

Yes.

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 16:46

I—and I remain in favor of the amendment too as having—being useful to—can—to have something in addition to the policy that comes from 1997 just because I think there are—it's probably gonna be something I'm not even thinking of. But I think we could open it up to things, concepts, and ideas out outside.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 17:13

If I could just toss out perhaps the what—something that might work for me is keeping the appreciation for the policy as the guideline, but perhaps we add something along the lines of, you know, Parks and Recreation Department, if they, you know, have the latitude that if there is a park name that doesn't fit the policy that they believe may be suitable, that they bring it to our attention. I would be okay with that. I just—I feel—I feel on the spot right now about changing the policy without more feedback from the department.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 18:00

I guess I'm not suggesting that we change the policy, and we're not talking about changing the policy. We're just allowing Park and Rec to consider things outside the bounds of the naming policy and it's six criteria. That—I get that we're not changing the policy, but we're providing a window to consider other names that don't fit.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 18:19

If I could just add, if you wouldn't mind. I think my sticking point is making it wider for the net to capture, as opposed to allowing Parks and Recreation to single out anything that they feel doesn't meet the policy but may be advantageous to the community. So, it would allow—it would it would empower the Parks and Recreation Department, as opposed to casting a wider net. And perhaps this would make more sense if I had seen the things that you had seen. But I don't know what those are, so I just—I struggle. I struggle with making it wider when we have a policy, and we're not going to change that policy, but I would be okay with empowering the Parks and Recreation Department to bring us items that come from the community that may may not fit, but may fit the space.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 19:17

Chair, if I could repeat the amendment because it may address Aldersperson Van Zeeland's concerns. The amendment is to also consider ideas and concepts that don't technically fall within the Naming Park—of Parkland Policy.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 19:35

It—could we ask the amender if that means the Parks and Recreation Department is doing that considering, or the Common Council is doing that considering?

Aldersperson Martyn Smith (District 4) 19:45

If—I think that would be a matter of back to the process that the that the part of—the Common Council wouldn't get it by this process before it's been looked at. I think that's without saying.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 20:00

That, as I understand, that amendment is to the process that staff has proposed.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 20:05

Okay. Then, if that's the case, I am open to that.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 20:12
Deputy Director.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 20:13

In the end, the department is going to make, I think it says three to five recommendations to—for committee to review.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 20:19

Okay, great. I apologize for all of that. I just wanted to make sure that this was—you know, we weren't introducing more into the process that would make it more difficult.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 20:28

Totally understand. Thank you, Alder Van Zeeland. Why don't we go move to a vote on the amendment? This is not the vote on the action item itself, but on this amendment. All in favor? Aye. Any in opposition or abstentions? That passes—the amendment passes four to zero, and we are back to the renaming process, which is our the main part of the action item.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 20:55

I wanted to, Deputy Director Flick, be clear about when does Council see this? If I'm reading this right, does this come to our—the names—there'll be a kind of a publicity campaign asking for names from the public. Those will come to Parks and Rec, and then there'll be a group within Parks and Rec who sifts through those. And then, do you bring five names to this committee, and then we would weigh in on that, and then take that to Council, and then council would make the decision?

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 21:28

Correct. Step five is when we'd bring recommendation—or not a recommendation, but ideas, concepts, names, three to five, to this committee, and then from there, the Committee will make a recommendation to Council in step six.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 21:42

Okay, so we won't see any names outside of those that you all have talked about and debated in Parks and Rec.

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 21:51

Unless you ask and request.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 21:52

Okay, I mean I'm—

Deputy Director Tom Flick (Parks and Rec) 21:53

—share that information.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 21:54

Okay, yeah. Alder Van Zeeland.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 21:58

Deputy Director Flick, do we know which alderperson represents this park area? And it's kind of—oh, okay, great. I just—

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 22:12

It's mine. Now. That was—

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 22:13

Excellent. I just wanted to make sure that if there is, like, a registered neighborhood or that the alderperson who represents that area you—that there is a special outreach to that neighborhood to ensure that they're very much included in this process. Thank you.

Alderson Martyn Smith (District 4) 22:31

Are there any other comments or questions? If not, why don't we move to a vote on action item 25-0979. All those in favor, please say aye. Aye. Anyone in opposition or abstentions? That action item carries four to zero.