



**Kordiak Park/ Highland Lake Public Meeting Synopsis**  
**4/25/2023 4:00PM-5:00PM**  
**Columbia Heights Public Library**

**Hosts:** Amáda Márquez Simula, Mayor, Columbia Heights  
Jeff Perry, Director, Anoka County Parks  
Quinn Palar, Natural Resources Manager, Anoka County Parks  
Mandy Meisner, Commissioner, Anoka County- (Absent due to COVID-19)

**Presentation:** Mayor Simula welcomed the attendees to the meeting and thanked them for joining the discussion. Jeff Perry provided an overview of the county parks system and provided a brief history of Kordiak County Park. Quinn Palar presented historical aerial photographs illustrating the state of Highland Lake prior to development, and the history of the neighborhood's development around the lake. Quinn Palar also presented slides prepared by Anoka Conservation District (ACD) detailing stormwater drainage from the surrounding watershed, recent water quality testing data, and the stormwater retrofit analysis performed by ACD. The meeting was then opened to public comments and questions, which were responded to for a short time, until, in the respect of everyone's time, all questions and comments were recorded to be responded to in accordance with this synopsis.

**Commentary and Response:**

- **What is the status of the drainage plan (Stormwater Retrofit Analysis - SRA)?** The SRA in Columbia Heights was completed by ACD in 2018. Highland Lake is on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Impaired Waters List and is currently identified to undergo a Total Maximum Daily Load study, designed inform and direct future watershed goals and strategies.
- **What can be done about the curb cut on Innsbruck backing up into the road?** The City of Columbia Heights plans to keep clear to improve drainage. Other improvements in that area will be explored by the County, City, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, and ACD to reduce and/or eliminate water backing up onto the road.
- **Why did the lake aeration system on Highland Lake cease to be used?** Historically, a bubbler type aeration system was operated by the county, presumably to oxygenate the water and promote desirable conditions in the lake. Anoka County Parks, through working with a consultant in 1999, determined that the aerator was churning up sediment, which caused higher levels of phosphorous in the water column resulting in exasperated algal blooms. As a result, aeration system was removed to improve water quality
- **What will be done about trail conditions that need to be addressed?** The county will assess trail conditions and abate any hazardous conditions found.

- **What is being done about nuisance geese in the park?** Anoka county adopted a goose management guideline in 2001, which allows the trapping and removal of geese. Due to increased concerns regarding health and safety, the county plans to enact those guidelines this year and in subsequent years, as needed. In recent years, the county has employed application of a chemical deterrent to keep geese away from high use areas, which will be continued.
- **Could dredging be utilized to improve lake quality?** In general, widespread dredging would not be permitted in a natural lake, such as Highland Lake. It may be potentially employed in some manner if determined to be needed to remove stormwater outfall sedimentation.
- **What is being done about buckthorn at Kordiak Park?** The county has been increasing and will continue its focus on the removal of buckthorn throughout Kordiak Park. Parks staff, Conservation Corps crews, and volunteer groups will work together to remove existing plants, manage regrowth, and replace with native species where appropriate.
- **Who is leading the Friends of Kordiak volunteer group?** This group has been inactive for several years, however, when it was active the group was organized and led by volunteers from the community. The county would be happy to work with a newly energized group to make a positive difference in Kordiak with clean-up, beautification efforts, and habitat improvement projects.
- **What can be done about the abundance of lily-pads present in the lake?** Being that Highland Lake has state lake designation, any removal or treatment of native vegetation would need to be done with proper permitting from the state. In speaking with regulators, it is unlikely that a permit would be issued to remove the floating vegetation for aesthetic reasons. The removal of native floating, emergent vegetation is only permitted on a small scale to allow access for recreation. Vegetation surveys will be conducted to identify specific populations and invasive, non-native species will be managed as resources allow.
- **Can anything be done about the foul odor that is present on the NW corner of the lake near the outlet to Clover Pond?** The odor present is likely to be due to anoxic decay of organic materials in the lake and nearby marshy soils. This is likely to be exacerbated by the overabundance of nutrients causing algal overgrowth and decreased oxygen in decay periods. Reducing phosphorus loads in the lake may improve the odor. The City of Columbia Heights will conduct further investigation of stormwater outfall pipe in the NW corner and jet it out if needed.

- **Residents have noticed a lack of animal diversity this spring - is there any explanation for that?** At the time of this meeting, snow and ice cover had cleared less than 2 weeks prior, later than typical, which would delay the presence of reptiles and amphibians who had not yet emerged from hibernation. Lack of fish may be due to winter kill of the lake due to heavy snow loads, long ice cover period, and decay of abundant organic material in the lake causing a drop in oxygen level below the tolerance level for fish present.
- **Can the rain gardens present be improved?** The county will work with staff and volunteers to increase diversity in the rain gardens to beautify the park and increase habitat for birds and pollinators.
- **Can you construct a paved pedestrian access path at the end of Argonne Dr NE, where it intersects with Innsbruck Parkway? This would facilitate access to the park by making a safer crossing point and by allowing easier access for bikes, wheelchairs, and strollers. Otherwise, pedestrians need to walk down Innsbruck Parkway to access the park.** Anoka County will explore the feasibility and cost and build it into a future capital improvement plan.

**Proposed Date for Volunteer Buckthorn Removal/ Native Planting: Oct 7, 2023, 9AM-12PM**  
RSVP to: Natural Resources Manager, Quinn Palar: [Quinn.Palar@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:Quinn.Palar@co.anoka.mn.us)

### Questions

Mayor Amáda Márquez Simula, Mayor, Columbia Heights: [AMarquezSimula@columbiaheights.gov](mailto:AMarquezSimula@columbiaheights.gov)

Anoka County Commissioner Mandy Meisner: [MandyMeisner@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:MandyMeisner@co.anoka.mn.us)

Anoka County Parks Director, Jeff Perry: [Jeff.Perry@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:Jeff.Perry@co.anoka.mn.us)

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