

CITIZENS LEAGUE REPORT

No. 169

**Minneapolis Park Board
Procedures for seeking a new
Superintendent**

October 1964

Citizens League
545 Mobil Oil Building
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402

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TO: Members, Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners

FROM: Citizens League Executive Committee, James L. Hetland, Jr., Chairman

SUBJECT: Minneapolis Park Board procedures in seeking a new Superintendent of the Minneapolis park system

BACKGROUND AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

On September 10, 1964, Howard I. Moore, Superintendent of the Minneapolis park system, submitted his resignation effective at the end of his current term, July, 1965. Moore has been an employee of the park system for 42 years, serving as Superintendent since 1959.

The Superintendent of Parks is a non-civil servant appointed by the Board of Park Commissioners for a term of office which is reviewed annually in July. Past experience justifies the general assumption that superintendents, once appointed, serve for lengthy periods of time and until they retire or leave of their own choosing. For example, it has been 80 years since the first Superintendent of Parks was appointed and during this span of years there have been only five superintendents.

After Superintendent Moore's announcement of his impending resignation, Park Board President Henry C. Rosacker named a committee of five Park Board members to search for a successor. Ben Berger was named chairman of the committee. Other committee members are Alexander Gallus, Arthur B. Johnson, Edwin Rapacz and Henry Rosacker. It is our understanding that this committee held a few sessions on a very preliminary basis but that, as yet, no specific progress reports have been issued, no timetable has been established, no specific procedures have been announced, and no statement of qualifications for the position has been developed.

Board President Rosacker, at the time he named the committee, was quoted as stating, "This committee will concern itself not only with applicants from this local area but will search the entire United States for the most competent, experienced man available."

Back in 1959, when Superintendent Charles E. Doell was reaching the mandatory retirement age of 65, the Park Board subjected itself to considerable unfavorable publicity, both locally and nationally, for its procedure in seeking a new Park Superintendent. The Board at that time publicly declared an intention to make a nationwide search for an outstanding successor to Superintendent Doell, and then proceeded to confine its search to reviewing applications of persons who demonstrated an interest. No effort was made to take the initiative in seeking advice from professionals in the field and in contacting outstanding individuals in other parts of the country to learn if they might be interested in the position.

The Citizens League, late in 1958, criticized the Minneapolis Park Board procedures and made a number of specific procedural recommendations. These recommendations, in essence, urged an intensive nationwide search to assure appointment of the most qualified person it was possible to interest in the position and

suggested certain important qualifications which should be considered in filling the position of Superintendent of Parks.

NATURE OF COMMITTEE'S ASSIGNMENT
AND SCOPE OF REPORT

The Citizens League's Board of Directors, at a meeting on October 7, 1965, directed its Executive Committee to review the situation and to make public, if the committee deemed it appropriate and helpful, our concern about the procedures being followed in selecting a new superintendent and to offer specific procedural suggestions. The Executive Committee has reviewed the situation and has concluded that it is in the public interest for the Citizens League to communicate to members of the Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners our conclusions and recommendations. We submit to the members of the Park Board the following general conclusions and recommendations. We hope they will be considered appropriate and helpful and, to the extent feasible, will be utilized.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We regard the position of Superintendent of Parks as exceedingly important. In fact, the outstanding national reputation justly earned by our park system resulted, to a crucially important degree, from the excellence of its superintendents.

2. We must assume, based on past experience, that whoever is selected as the new park superintendent will serve in that position for a considerable period of time.

3. Because of the importance of the position and because of the likely longevity of the appointment, we regard the procedures which are used and the ultimate decision to be extremely important. Almost certainly, this will be the most important decision made by members of the Board of Park Commissioners for some time to come.

4. We wholeheartedly commend and endorse the statement of Board President Rosacker that "This committee will concern itself not only with applicants from this local area, but will search the entire United States for the most competent, experienced man available."

5. We believe that certain procedural steps are imperative if President Rosacker's pledge is to be implemented effectively. They include:

(a) The immediate development by the committee and approval by the Park Board of a general set of guiding principles, setting forth the more important qualifications required to perform adequately the duties of Park Superintendent. Among the qualifications we believe should be considered are:

- (1) Demonstrated administrative ability as indicated by managerial experience in a park and recreation system.
- (2) An educational background or extensive experience in park development and administration.

- (3) Vision and imagination for planning and operating a park and recreation system to meet changing needs.
 - (4) The ability to communicate with the public and members of other governmental agencies and to interpret to them the requirements and needs of a good park and recreation system.
 - (5) The prospect that he will offer a relatively extended period of service as Park Superintendent.
- (b) The accumulation of a list of experienced administrators in other cities who have attained outstanding reputations; taking positive steps to contact these administrators to personally assess their qualifications and to determine their degree of interest in the position. It is imperative that this type of active searching out of prospective applicants be undertaken. As a practical matter, it is unlikely that the type of individual who would make an outstanding Park Superintendent will publicly announce his interest and availability in response to general requests for applications.
 - (c) Outstanding park administrators from elsewhere should then be compared with qualified employees now in Minneapolis city government. In making the final selection, any reasonable doubt should be resolved in favor of the local individual.

6. We are convinced that through the establishment of procedures such as we have suggested, and perhaps only in this way, the Minneapolis park system will be assured of continuing effective leadership in this important administrative post.