

CITIZENS LEAGUE REPORT

No. 104

**To Include Minneapolis in the Hennepin  
County Park Reserve District**

**March 1959**

Appeal by Bd 3/4/59 (104)

February 17, 1959

**TO: Board of Directors**

**FROM: City and County Parks Committees**

**SUBJECT: Inclusion of Minneapolis in the Hennepin County Park Reserve District**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Citizens League proposal to establish metropolitan park districts was enacted by the state legislature during the 1955 session and was signed into law by Governor Freeman on April 26, 1955. The law, considerably scaled down to meet legislative opposition, authorizes the voters or their elected representatives to establish a park district, if and when they wish. Counties eligible to form districts under the law are Hennepin, Wright, Carver, Scott, Anoka, Dakota and Washington. Ramsey is excluded, as is the City of Minneapolis.

The Hennepin County Park Reserve District was actually formed in 1957 by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners following petitions signed by a majority of the city and village councils within the proposed district.

The primary function of the Hennepin County Park Reserve District is "not the establishment of parks and playgrounds of a local or neighborhood character, but rather the acquisition, development and maintenance of large parks, forest and other reservations, and wild life sanctuaries, and of means for public access for historic sites and to lakes, rivers and streams and to natural phenomena."

#### **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

During 1958, the Hennepin County Park Reserve District formally adopted a long-range plan for development of the county park system, made its first purchase of future park land, and had transferred to its jurisdiction Maple Hill Park (now Morris Baker Park) on Lake Independence. The single greatest obstacle to proper development of the Hennepin County Park Reserve District plan is lack of adequate financial resources. Reserve District Commissioners have been exploring a number of ways to increase the financial capacity of the district, including amending the park reserve district law to eliminate exclusion of the City of Minneapolis from becoming a part of the reserve district. A bill to accomplish this objective has been drawn and is now being presented to the Hennepin County legislative delegation in the hope it will be favorably considered at this legislative session.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

We support proposed legislation which would allow Minneapolis to become part of the Hennepin County Park Reserve District.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The Citizens League consistently maintained that Minneapolis should have been a part of the Hennepin County Park Reserve District from the time of its establishment. But for political reasons it was necessary to exclude Minneapolis

from the district in order to secure passage of the legislation. The objectives of the reserve district set forth in the creative act, as well as the subsequent long-range plan adopted by the Hennepin County Park Reserve District, clearly indicate that residents of Minneapolis will share in the benefits equally along with those residents of suburban Hennepin County.

Minneapolis residents have enjoyed and benefited by the development of the Minneapolis park system (the lands of which were reserved by a handful of foresighted citizens years prior to the need by the present population), as well as from easy access to adjacent rural undeveloped areas. However, these areas are now crowded or are becoming increasingly inaccessible because of the rapid and accelerating expansion and buildup within suburban Hennepin County. It is to the benefit of all citizens of Hennepin County, and especially those within the densely populated areas, to preserve accessibility to lakes, forests and other natural and historic sites within a reasonable distance of the city. It is, therefore, urgent that Minneapolis residents join now with suburban residents in the foresighted responsibility of acquiring, financing and planning a countywide park reserve system while lands of the proper type are still available.