

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: November 10, 2015

For the Community Development Committee meeting of November 16, 2015

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of December 9, 2015

Subject: Lake Waconia Regional Park Boundary Amendment, Carver County

District(s), Member(s): MPOSC District B, Robert Moeller

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statute 473.313

Staff Prepared/Presented: Michael Peterka, Intern (651-602-1361)

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Division/Department: Community Development, Regional Parks and Natural Resources

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve an amendment to the boundary of Lake Waconia Regional Park to add the 33.77 acre property known as Coney Island as shown in Attachment A.

Background

Lake Waconia Regional Park is located along the southeast shore of Lake Waconia in Carver County. The existing regional park is 132.66 acres in size. The most recent regional park master plan was approved by the Metropolitan Council in 2001, and the development plan can be seen in Attachment B. In both the 2030 and 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plans, Coney Island was identified as a location for a potential boundary adjustment due to the opportunity for preservation, interpretation, and compatible recreation. Carver County is requesting that the boundary amendment take place now to help facilitate the acquisition of the island. In 2016, Carver County will be completing a full update to the Lake Waconia Regional Park Master Plan that will include development plans for Coney Island.

The island topography ranges from gentle to steep slopes rising to an elevation of 40-60 feet above the water. The high elevation allows for scenic views of the lake, City of Waconia, and surrounding lake shore. The island's natural resources consist of 5,480 feet of shore line with dense vegetation and altered/nonnative mature trees covering the entire area. The Minnesota Land Cover Classification System graphic for the island can be seen in Attachment C. The island also contains a Double Crested Cormorant rookery with Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, and Black-crowned Night Herons using the same nesting areas. In 1976, Coney Island was placed on the National Register of Historic Places due to cabins, homes, and a hotel once being located on the island. The structures are no longer standing with only a few remnants still remaining. Despite the significant human activity that has taken place on the island, a 2015 Environmental Site Assessment did not reveal any hazardous conditions.

Prior to site development, which will take place after the 2016 Lake Waconia Regional Park Master Plan update, management and stewardship of the island will consist of signing the property indicating it is owned and managed by Carver County. It will also be posted that the property is currently unsafe for public enjoyment and will undergo remediation to address unsafe conditions. Operations will consist of public awareness of planning work, sign maintenance, site monitoring, and responding to inquiries and issues.

In preparation for the 2016 Lake Waconia Regional Park Master Plan update, Carver County has begun their community engagement process. This has included a series of public meetings, engagement activities at various community events, creation of a project website, and the formation of a Technical Advisory Committee. The master plan update will also expand on a number of requirements related to the planning of Coney Island. These include the development concept, demand forecast, public services, operations and maintenance, public awareness, stewardship, and accessibility.

Rationale

The Lake Waconia Regional Park Boundary Amendment is consistent with the requirements of the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and other Council policies. Of particular relevance, this amendment is consistent with the Siting and Acquisition Strategy 1: Lands with natural resource features and/or access to water will have priority over other proposed park land.

Funding

Coney Island has an appraised value of \$1,350,000. Actual acquisition costs will be delineated in a future grant request.

Approval of this boundary amendment to the master plan makes the acquisition costs eligible for regional parks funding, but does not commit the Council to any funding. Future funding based on this master plan may be awarded through the Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund. Council action is required to approve the CIP and to approve specific grants to Carver County.

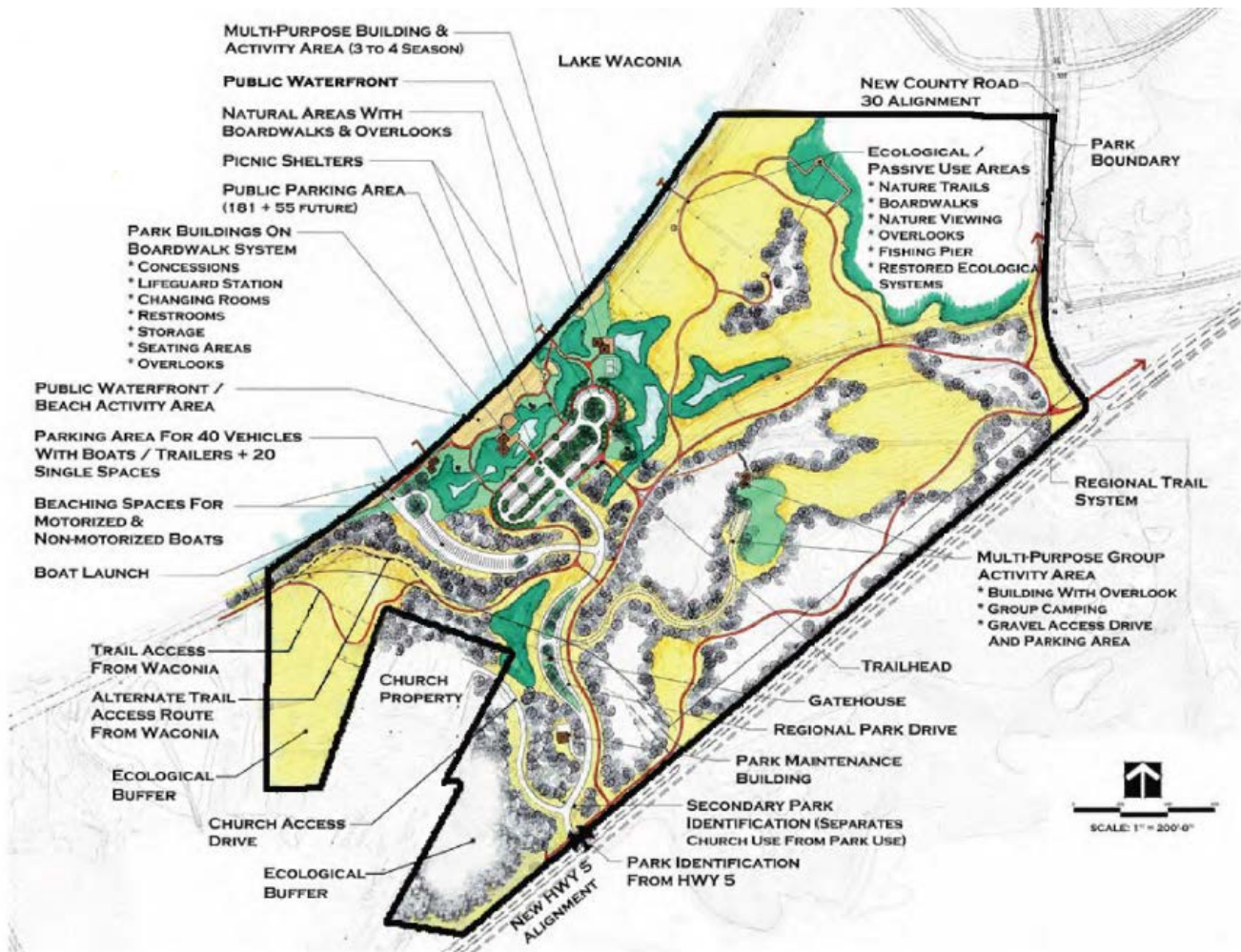
Known Support / Opposition

The Carver County Board approved an agreement for the acquisition of Coney Island and preparation of the master plan amendment on March 3, 2015. There is no known opposition.

Attachment A: Overview of Coney Island, the location of the proposed boundary amendment property, in relation to the existing Lake Waconia Regional Park.



Attachment B: Development Plan from the 2001 Lake Waconia Regional Park Master Plan



Attachment C: Minnesota Land Cover Classification System graphic for Coney Island

