

Minutes of the

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 6, 2016

Committee Members Present: Johnston, Hietpas, Kemery, Kopp, Moeller, Taylor, Theisen, Weber

Committee Members Absent: Gillespie, Wulff- liaison

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Johnston called the regular meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:45 p.m. on September 6, 2016, after a tour of Minnewashta Regional Park with Carver County Park Director Martin Walsh.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

It was moved by Weber, seconded by Moeller to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

It was moved by Kopp, seconded by Taylor to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2016 regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Motion carried.

BUSINESS

2016-175 Minimum Percentage of Parks and Trails Legacy Fund Grant Spending to Connect People and the Outdoors (Rainry Salk, 651-602-1669 and Gratia Ratzloff, 651-602-1212)

It was moved by Theisen, seconded by Moeller, That the Metropolitan Council implement a graduated approach to meeting a minimum percentage of ten percent of Parks and Trails Fund appropriations that is to be spent on "connecting people and the outdoors" by FY 2022/23 biennium. This graduated approach would be implemented as follows:

- Agencies will allocate a minimum of 5% of their Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriations to "connecting people and the outdoors" for the FY 2018/19 biennium (beginning July 1, 2017)
- Agencies will allocate a minimum of 7% of their Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriations to "connecting people and the outdoors" for FY the 2020/21 biennium (beginning July 1, 2019)
- Agencies will allocate a minimum of 10% of their Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriations to "connecting people and the outdoors" for the FY 2022/23 biennium (beginning July 1, 2021)

After the FY 2022/23 biennium, the appropriateness of 10% as the minimum percentage of Legacy spending on "connecting people and the outdoors" will be assessed and altered if appropriate.

Salk presented the business item to the commission, MPOSC members had a lot of questions.

Moeller asked about how many regional park implementing agencies participated in meetings.

Salk responded all participated, 9 attended scheduled meeting and 1 agency had a "makeup meeting".

Weber asked for a definition of "partners".

Salk responded that this is a broad term including the Metropolitan Parks and Opens Space Commission, Regional Park implementing agencies, parks and trails organizations, community groups, the Council, and others who want to partner with us.

There was discussion on how the vast majority of the Legacy allocations support capital projects, and that a much smaller amount goes to non-capital projects.

Mullin explained the pillars, strategies, and the desire for a balanced approach to funding activities associated with connecting people and the outdoors.

Taylor asked about measurable outcomes associated with the “connecting” work. He is interested in some mandatory minimum percentage but wants to understand the perspectives of the implementing agencies. A three percent investment is not enough to engage people of color and youth. An increase in value and intention is needed.

Hietpas expressed her concern about the importance of taking care of what we have with the Capital improvement program and the cost of restorations and improvements.

Salk explained this recommendation is just to connect people to the outdoors (broadly speaking, attracting new users and retaining existing users), not funding capital projects. Park staff monitors funds, provides analysis as part of the 2040 Park Policy Plan.

Moeller wanted to address the disparity and utilization of the parks, serving the general population, in favor of strategies attracting dis-affected and non-affected. He would like to know what kind of evaluation will occur to confirm if the money is well spent.

Salk responded state statutes on Legacy funds require an evaluation of the money spent for each project, and the requirement to identify measurable outcomes.

Johnston questioned the long and short term support and suggested looking at the big picture.

Kemery suggested tabling this item for a month. He’s not sure about the assessment measuring success, no cookie cutter solution to attract people to the different regional parks.

Johnston remarked we as a commission review projects before us, we have no public hearings. Items go to CDC, delaying for more information is inconsistent.

Kemery commented that if the letters submitted by Holly Jenkins, Women Observing Wildlife Minnesota, and Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, are accurate we are pushing this recommendation on the agencies.

Salk responded that conversations on this topic began in 2014 and it has been a part of the approved policy plan in February of 2015.

Kemery asked if there is any evidence the current 3% is achieving more usage of the parks, or not achieving goals.

Salk responded that efforts to increase this work have been initiated however no results related to projects have been submitted. Tough to tease out a particular effort.

Moeller questioned the timing of the request to respond was too tight for implementing agencies.

Hietpas requested clarification on acquisitions and capital improvements, does the percentage dedicated to connecting people to the outdoors take away from other expenditures, for example fighting invasive species.

Johnston ask if any implementing agencies in the audience would like to speak.

Marty Walsh, Carver County parks director, reminded the commission that the salary of the park representative we met on the tour is funded in part by Legacy funds. Performance measures and

outcomes are difficult to track in this pillar. Also you need to recognize that the ten implementing agencies are so different that this can compound the challenge to measure across the system.

Johnathon Vlaming made 5 points to the commission; 1) hesitant to use Legacy funds for non-capital projects because it is a non-stable funding source. 2) You need to look at the entire funding stream for each agency to understand appropriate allocation strategies. 3) Concern on the level of involvement of the park agencies. We are partners. We need to work together and find consensus. 4) Timing to submit projects this round has been challenging. 5) Better path for Met Council and the 10 agencies to reach consensus, address relevance, achieve a common solution and eliminate silos.

Adam Arvidson, Director of Strategic Planning, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board spoke and expanded on his letter that he submitted to the Commissioners. Adam talked about the “connecting people and the outdoors” pillar of the Parks and Trails Legacy funds. He objected to the pace of the minimums, problems with this year’s allocations, amount of staff and programs; none would be eligible. He is not opposed to the minimums, but is opposed to the rollout. He suggested an alternative requirement to recommend that the agencies allocate some degree of spending this year, but not mandate it at this time.

Weber asked Adam what Minneapolis is doing in this area.

Adam gave examples of programs connecting people to the outdoors; summer camps, 35,000 free lunches, after school programs, fulltime education staff person, festivals, targeting new users with events.

Kemery asked if 5% minimum would allow to hire more staff or infrastructure.

Adam explained the 5% would not apply to infrastructure. Funds would need to be spent on marketing, new programs, no spending on improvement or rehab. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has an historic system with significant restoration, redevelopment, and maintenance needs.

Motion to approve recommendation from Weber with a friendly amendment to propose 4% for 2018-19 and future discussions for the remaining rate. No second, motion failed.

Johnson remarked he is concerned the 1st year’s percentage would delay implementation.

Taylor suggested executing the 1st year at 5% which shows a commitment to the process, and then begin a collaborative regional strategy to develop a process to distribute future allocations.

Salk reminded the commission of state statutes regarding the allocation formula, and how it would require a legislative change to alter this formula for a “regional” shared allocation.

Theisen commented is concern the implementing agencies need more time yet he recognizes that the item cannot be tabled with the Legacy process moving forward.

Hietpas agreed, need to agree on a recommendation before item goes to CDC and the Council.

Weber asked what happens if the agencies don’t submit projects in this area?

Salk answered she’s not sure. The request is to submit prioritized projects.

Mullin commented that what is needed is a reasonable recommendation for a minimum amount of commitment on the non-capital “connecting” work that agencies can get behind. While reluctant to call

out minimums, this recommendation for spending legacy funds supports a balanced approach as called out in the 25-year Legacy plan.

Johnston asked what will measure the effectiveness of funds spent after the 1st year.

Mullin commented that the work around connecting people to the outdoors takes time and effort to be able to measure behavioral changes. This is not something you do and then get immediate results.

Kopp asked is if after 2018-19 if park usage declines, will more money be spent the next year?

Salk responded the grant period are on a bi-annual, outcomes measured on a 4 year average.

Johnston proposed three options; approve recommendation as presented, delay vote, propose amendment to recommendation.

Mullin stated a delay in the process for 2018-19 would result in an even more challenging timeframe.

After additional discussion an amended recommendation was motioned:

That the Metropolitan Council implement the following approach to meeting a minimum percentage of Parks and Trails Fund appropriations to be spent on “connecting people and the outdoors”:

- Agencies will allocate a minimum of 5% of their Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriations to “connecting people and the outdoors” for the FY 2018/19 biennium (beginning July 1, 2017)
- For FY2020/21 and FY2022/23 biennia, the Metropolitan Council staff will convene stakeholders including the regional park implementing agencies as soon as practical to work collaboratively to develop a recommendation for a minimum percentage to be spent on “connecting people and the outdoors”.

INFORMATION

1. **Presentation to the Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee** (Jan Youngquist, 651-602-1029) – Item postponed to a later meeting.
2. **Determining Best Approach for October 4 MPOSC Meeting Agenda** (Emmett Mullin, 651-602-1360)

Parks manager asked the commission members their preferences regarding the October 4, 2016 MPOSC meeting. Due to a lengthy agenda, members were asked if they preferred one 3 hour meeting or two short meetings. Members agreed to one 3 hour meeting on October 4.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Michele Wenner
Recording Secretary