

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, January 2, 2018

Committee Members Present:

Tony Yarusso, Rick Theisen, Catherine Fleming, Todd Kemery, Margie Andreason, Anthony Taylor
Mike Kopp, Bob Moeller, Wendy Wulff

Committee Members Absent:

Sarah Hietpas

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 2, 2018.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the January 2, 2018 Agenda. Andreason motioned and it was seconded by Theisen to approve the agenda. The **Agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 14, 2017 special meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. It was motioned by Moeller and seconded by Kemery. The **Minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

None.

BUSINESS

2018-2, Robert Piram Regional Trail, Master Plan Amendment, St. Paul - Michael Peterka, Planner

Peterka gave a presentation on the master plan amendment for the Robert Piram Regional Trail submitted by St. Paul as outlined in the materials provided.

Moeller asked about the name change proposal, while this is an honor, he asked if the change will set a precedent? He stated that we've used more descriptive names in the past and asked if anyone has an issue. Several commissioners noted other trails that were named after people.

Kemery asked if they are naming just this portion of the trail (3.4 miles). Peterka stated that was correct.

Youngquist explained that there is nothing in the Regional Parks Policy Plan pertaining to the naming of trails and stated that it is a local decision.

Fleming asked if there will be any financial responsibility to the name change. Youngquist noted that this is a new trail, so no existing signage changes will be necessary and added that signage is the responsibility of the implementing agency.

Kemery asked about safety issues concerning travel over the railroad tracks. Alice Messer, St. Paul stated that there will be a temporary crossing (projected to be used for 5-10 years) until an overpass is constructed.

Chair Yarusso asked if the crossing will have signals. Messer responded that she did not know about the exact signaling approach but acknowledged that safety is a major concern for her agency.

Chair Yarusso stated that the development costs of the trail seem higher than usual. Peterka noted that there will be a boardwalk that travels over a wetland which adds to the cost, as well as other complicated matters.

Theisen asked if alternatives have been explored. Messer stated that this project has been looked at for a number of years. It is a challenging area to build a trail, yet once realized, it will provide critical connections with other parts of the Regional Parks System.

Moeller asked about safety and if staff feel it is a safe trail. Messer stated that St. Paul has received Federal funds and has worked with MnDOT to ensure that qualified people review the trail from a safety perspective.

Taylor asked if this trail will accommodate combined use. Messer stated that while it is a combined use trail, it will mostly be used by bikes, and she noted that there is a sidewalk across the street.

Steve Sullivan, Dakota County Parks stated that they have been working with St. Paul on this trail connection and gave visitation numbers. He feels that the connections will be an attraction as it will create a critical link between St. Paul, Dakota County, and much of the rest of the regional system.

Wulff stated that this will give a defined connection that will be a benefit to her district and beyond.

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion.

It was motioned by Kemery and seconded by Theisen to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Robert Piram Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Require Saint Paul to submit estimated development costs related to the overpass of Barge Channel Road to the Metropolitan Council for review and approval prior to seeking grants for its development.
3. Require that Saint Paul, prior to initiating development of the regional trail, send preliminary plans to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services, for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the regional interceptor system.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

2018-3, North Mississippi Regional Park Grant Request, Webber Natural Swimming Pool, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board - Tori Dupre, Senior Planner

Dupre gave a presentation on the grant request for North Mississippi Regional Park for the Webber Natural Swimming Pool from Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso spoke to the funding sources and the balance in the North Mississippi Regional Park fund.

Mullin noted that we don't know the exact fund balance to date (it will come in February).

Mary Robison, Finance clarified that there is currently 1.895 million, however they still need to add end of the year transfer of interest, so this is an unaudited amount.

Theisen noted that other proposals may still come in. Mullin confirmed and stated, in fact, Three Rivers Park District (TRPD) has submitted a request to be heard at a future meeting.

Jonathan Vlaming, TRPD, discussed the history of the park along the river and how it was funded. He respectfully asked that TRPD's request be considered at a future meeting.

It was motioned by Theisen and seconded by Moeller to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant in the amount of \$1,000,000 to reimburse the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board for the construction of a natural filtration swimming pool, bathhouse and site

improvements at North Mississippi Regional Park. The grant will be funded from the North Mississippi Regional Park Fund account.

2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement on behalf of the Council.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

2018-4, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Rush Creek Regional Trail, (Wegner), Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and Parks and Trails Fund, Three Rivers Park District - Deb Jensen, Senior Parks Finance Planner

Jensen gave a presentation on the request from Three Rivers Park District for a park acquisition opportunity fund grant for Rush Creek Regional Trail, as outlined in the staff report provided.

Wulff asked what is going to be done with the buildings on the property. Kelly Grissman, TRPD, stated they would be removed and the land returned to open space.

Wulff asked if any consideration has been given to a portion being put back on the tax roll? Grissman stated that was a good question and discussed why it was important to keep the entire property in tact to allow for future possible alignments including connecting the trail with the nearby road.

Taylor asked when the trail will be completed. Grissman stated that this is a 30-40 year process, as they are working with willing sellers.

Taylor asked whether TRPD will be requesting future reimbursement for this acquisition. Youngquist noted that if the local match comes from TRPD own funds, and they request future reimbursement, then they can request it.

It was motioned by Andreason and seconded by Taylor to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$558,107 to Three Rivers Park District to acquire the Wegner parcel at 15510 Territorial Road, Maple Grove for Rush Creek Regional Trail;
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council;
3. Consider reimbursing Three Rivers Park District for up to \$186,036 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program for costs associated with this acquisition; and
4. Inform Three Rivers Park District that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that future reimbursement will be granted, and expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

INFORMATION

2018 Parks and Trails Legacy Regional Celebrations - Update - Emmett Mullin, Manager Regional Parks & Natural Resources and Paul Purman

Mullin provided information regarding 8 upcoming celebrations for the passage of the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment as outlined in the materials provided. The purpose of the celebrations is to celebrate, educate and gather input.

Paul Purman, DNR Legacy Coordinator, distributed copies of the Legacy Plan (available online). He discussed the plans vision for Minnesota and the four strategic directions that frame the plan. They are Connecting people and the outdoors; Acquire land, create opportunities; Take care of what we have;

and Coordination among partners. He discussed the shared outcomes reporting requirement regarding the Legacy Plan and the Legislative Coordinating Committee's website.

Mullin noted that the Commission is invited to participate and discussed the types of activities that will be held at the celebrations.

Fleming asked if there will be anything at Theodore Wirth Regional Park? Mullin stated that there will not be a celebration held at Theodore Wirth. He noted that there will be two celebrations within the Twin Cities and 6 others throughout Minnesota, as listed in the materials provided. He discussed the costs and planning involved.

Purman discussed having a 'pop-up' Legacy event at the State Fair, to increase awareness of the Legacy Amendment and share what we learned during these 8 celebrations.

Andreason asked if there has been any thought of doing something online or through social media. Purman stated that there is and passed out small cards (similar to a business card) that gave more contact information to visit online.

Taylor asked about a connection to diverse communities, i.e., regarding transportation. Mullin shared that the Legacy Advisory Committee, which initiated the celebrations, has inclusivity a major theme of these events. He also noted the critical nature of the ten implementing agencies to ensure that these celebrations are successful.

2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update - Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst Parks and Dan Marckel, Planning Analyst Research

Youngquist gave an update on the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. She introduced Dan Marckel, Planning Analyst, who will be managing the process. Youngquist reviewed the process and timeline.

Marckel stated that he is looking for comments and input from this group. He asked the group to think about two questions as implementers: What works? What could be done better?

Taylor stated he wished there was a more structured developmental process – understanding that the Regional Parks Policy Plan has a steep learning curve. Every meeting is an 'in session' learning opportunity.

Fleming asked for a geographic list of her district. She also wants to better understand the community engagement processes prior to this commission making decisions.

Youngquist discussed community engagement requirements that were part of the most recent update of the Regional Parks Policy Plan.

Mullin stated that the implementation of Master Planning is the responsibility of the implementing agency. As a Commission, this group is an advisory commission – not a decision-making body. Depending with the issue, this responsibility lies with the regional park implementing agencies or the Metropolitan Council.

Moeller is concerned that sometimes we get 'too deep in the weeds' regarding which pots of funds the money comes from. He believes we need to trust staff to put this level of information together. He doesn't feel it's a good use of time regarding which pots money should come from.

Andreason stated she would like more clarity around our role (as commissioners) and how it corresponds to materials we get.

Theisen discussed the relationship between agencies and this Commission. Also, how pieces coming into this policy fit into the overall picture.

Yarusso stated that he appreciates some of the details staff provides in order to better understand the policy issues. He wants to understand how the proposed actions fit within the region.

Andreason and several other commissioners stated that field tours 'work' well.

Yarusso asked the group to send additional comments to staff.

Marckel thanked the Commission and stated that this will help inform their work.

REPORTS

Chair: None.

Commissioners: Andreason brought up concerns she has been hearing regarding the China Garden at Phalen Regional Park and the issue using terms not respectful of the Hmong cultural heritage. She asked if this impression was correct?

Mullin introduced some guests to help provide clarity.

Alice Messer attended the meeting for St. Paul along with Jeff Vang and Romi Slowiak from the Minnesota China Friendship Garden advisory team. They clarified that in China, there is no official name for the Hmong ethnic group and that all the Hmong people in China are called Miao-Zu. In China, this is a not a derogatory word.

The pronunciation of the character for this term in the United States sounds like a cat, animal, or barbarian and the Hmong community feels that it is a derogatory term. Originally the design for the garden used this character, but it has been removed from the drawings. (The original architect is from Changsha, China).

Todd Kemery reported that he is meeting regularly with Dakota County Parks staff regarding MPOSC business. He believes this helps him be a more effective Commissioner.

Staff: Mullin reported that Mike Hahm, the St. Paul Park Director, was reappointed to a new term. Jayne Miller, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Superintendent, decided to resign her post and has accepted a new job to lead the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. Finally, Mullin reported that Celina Martina, the Metropolitan Council's Senior Outreach Coordinator for the Parks Ambassador Program left for a new position. Plans are underway to hire a new ambassador as soon as possible.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary