

Minutes of the

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

Committee Members Present:

Tony Yarusso, Mike Kopp, Bob Moeller, Todd Kemery, Sarah Hietpas, Anthony Taylor, Wendy Wulff

Committee Members Absent:

Margie Andreason, Rick Theisen, Catherine Fleming

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the special meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:02 p.m. on Tuesday, April 10, 2018.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the April 10, 2018 Agenda. Moeller motioned, and it was seconded by Hietpas to approve the agenda. The **Agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 6, 2018 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. It was motioned by Moeller and seconded by Taylor. The **Minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

None.

BUSINESS

Ridgeway Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment – Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board – Jake Reilly, Local Planning Assistance

Reilly introduced himself and gave a presentation on the request from the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) for a master plan amendment for the Ridgeway Parkway Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked about the plan in 2008 that was withdrawn. Adam Arvidson, MPRB gave some history on the Grand Rounds 'missing link' and stated the withdrawal came as a result of differences of opinion among the partners at that time. He discussed the current plan to partner with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, to make a true regional trail connection.

Moeller asked for clarification about whether this is a request for funding or simply a master plan amendment. Arvidson explained that they will come back later with a funding request.

It was motioned by Hietpas and seconded by Kopp to recommend that the Metropolitan Council approve the Ridgeway Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.

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

West Mississippi River Regional Trail and Elm Creek Park Reserve Trail Connector Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District – Raya Esmaeili, Local Planning Assistance

Esmaeili introduced herself and gave a presentation on the request from Three Rivers Park District (3RPD) for a master plan amendment for West Mississippi River Regional Trail and Elm Creek Park Reserve Trail connector as outlined in the materials provided.

Esmaeili noted that additional comments were provided after the staff report was written. This doesn't change any findings of the master plan but will change the staff report before being forwarded to the Community Development Committee and the Council. Due to these comments, a third proposed action was added to the report and reviewed at this time.

Chair Yarusso asked about the Elm Creek Connector piece. Kelly Grissman, 3RPD noted that the Medicine Lake Regional Trail is much broader and there is a lot of development happening in this area and they are trying to be efficient with resources.

Hietpas asked about crossing on Diamond Lake Road and why it is not a direct connection. Grissman stated that the area is a sanctuary and the community supported this route.

Moeller discussed equity being addressed at the master plan level and noted that page 9 talks about this (it references studying this) but wonders if this Commission will ever hear what was done. Grissman discussed the public engagement being done and also programming being done to work with diverse groups.

Chair Yarusso discussed the Mississippi River Critical Corridor. Mullin stated that the current Regional Parks Policy Plan (RPPP) doesn't require action in this area however the updated 2040 RPPP will have agencies addressing it.

Chair Yarusso asked about the topography and ADA issues. Grissman stated there are no issues – this is the reason for the alignment design. She discussed other areas in the future where they are planning to be more aggressive in acquisition and there is also land that is more suited to getting people to the river's edge.

Taylor discussed the engagement process and equity and felt that there is more that could be done. Grissman outlined the additional engagement being done and it will show with the Coon Rapids Regional Park and trail system.

Grissman asked the Commission if they have suggestions for better engagement. Taylor talked about more adult activation.

Grissman shared in more detail some of the engagement they've been doing. Taylor stated the list is long and that's great but, in the end, we need to measure outcomes. He acknowledged the challenge.

Chair Yarusso stated this might be something that could be put into a user survey – asking people if they have been approached for engagement.

Taylor talked about asking groups that are already into the trails – how do we reach others regarding future interest.

Moeller discussed Taylor's point that Brooklyn Park has a very diverse population and is a great area to delve further.

Grissman stated that 3RPD does surveys every 5 years. She noted during the public engagement they don't ask them to identify their ethnic identity as it creates an uncomfortable atmosphere and they shut down. Instead they work with self-identified groups. Moeller applauded the work the 3RPD is doing.

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

1. Approve the West Mississippi River Regional Trail and Elm Creek Park Reserve Trail Connector Master Plan.
2. Require that Three Rivers Park District, 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.
3. Encourage Three Rivers Park District to continue coordination with Minnesota Department of Transportation and Hennepin County Public Works Department in the development of the Highway 252 Corridor Study and amend the Master Plan as needed to incorporate any changes in the alignment.

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

INFORMATION

2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update, Recreation Facilities and Activities – Emmett Mullin, Manager (Regional Parks and Natural Resources), and Dan Marckel, Planning Analyst (Regional Policy and Research)

Mullin and Marckel gave an update on Chapter 4 of the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update (Update) regarding recreational facilities and activities as outlined in the materials provided.

Moeller noted that he didn't feel the current Regional Parks Policy Plan (RPPP) held an exclusive list of activities. Mullin felt that it's not meant to be exclusive – this is why they are moving towards a more performance-based list over time. Moeller suggested verbiage to note that the lists are not exclusive.

Kemery felt that flexibility is key. He asked who has the final word on what is allowed. Mullin doesn't have the answer but highlighted the value of the master planning process.

Chair Yarusso suggested language that is flexible but also the need for consistency. He also noted it is not clear what two phrases mean – 'tied to natural resources', and 'not adversely affected'.

Mullin discussed tension that exists with nature-based activities affecting natural resources and the threshold that exists.

Wulff liked the idea of flexibility but doesn't want to take over city parks and uses found in them.

Kemery referred to page 68 of the RPPP regarding ballfields (not formal) for programmed ball. Mullin noted this is a good example.

Marckel talked about achieving some restoration of areas that are somewhat 'wrecked'.

Mullin noted that providing a high level of recreational use is important.

Marckel stated that this is the one strategy that leads us to other parts of the Council – i.e., transit. He discussed the range of activities across the region and stated that this is an area we are working on.

Taylor stated most heavily used activities tend to end up in urban areas.

Chair Yarusso discussed activities that could broaden to more rural areas.

Mullin discussed the range of opportunities across the system – it is not outlined in this strategy.

Taylor discussed thresholds in quality of experiences and how do we link and support equitable use.

Wulff noted that we only provide a small portion of what money goes into these parks and none of the operations and maintenance money.

Marckel reviewed the third strategy in the materials provided and noted this is a 'fresher' strategy. Mullin felt there was broad support for strengthening equitable use from the implementing agencies.

Hietpas is frustrated by the idea of prioritizing projects and now not prioritizing projects. Wulff discussed the Legacy money – and how the Legislature established a new law directing the Council to accept the project lists from the locally elected boards. This change will also be carried forward to the CIP prioritization process.

Mullin also discussed the removal of the requirement to establish a minimum percentage amount of the Legacy allocation to “connect people and the outdoors”.

Chair Yarusso asked how we measure progress and what is successful threshold. Also, if we're not meeting it what are we doing to fix it?

Marckel talked about what the implementing agencies do that we don't see because we don't fund.

Taylor talked about regional strategy around equity.

Moeller talked about the Ambassador Program that will help communicate some of the strategies being done.

Marckel discussed the fourth strategy and encouraged commission members to comment on the Transportation Policy Plan and noted that the implementing agencies have been encouraged to comment on it as well (in addition to the Update).

Chair Yarusso noted that comments provided by Women Observing Wildlife Minnesota were provided and asked Catherine Zimmer if she had anything to add. Zimmer stated she did not however wanted to state that she does not feel that biking through regional parks to commute is not an appropriate use.

Chair Yarusso discussed creating trails that have natural resource corridors that protect and conserve natural resources.

Mullin reviewed the next steps.

Kemery asked where public comments will be taken. Wulff stated that there will be a public hearing at the Community Development Committee Meeting however written comments may be received in the two months prior to the public hearing.

Kemery pointed out language in the RPPP that encourages use of guidelines of the US Access Board. Mullin noted that the standards of the US Access Board are becoming more well known.

Grissman stated they have an ADA transition plan and spend a great deal of time utilizing the US Access Board recommendations during the design of parks. She feels all agencies utilize this.

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso highlighted the upcoming Parks and Trails Legacy Celebrations:

4/27 in Collegeville, MN (at St. John's University)

4/29 in Marshall, MN (at the Red Baron Expo Center & Camden State Trail)

5/11 in Bloomington, MN (at the Normandale Lake Bandshell)

5/19 in Rochester, MN (at 125 LIVE)

6/2 in Park Rapids, MN (at Itasca State Park)

6/16 in Fergus Falls, MN (at Prairie Wetland Environmental Learning Center)

6/27 in Duluth, MN (at Essentia Health Duluth Heritage Sports Center)

Chair Yarusso also gave a Legislative update and stated that the regional park implementing agencies have introduced a bonding bill asking for \$15 million.

Commissioners: Kemery reported that he meets monthly with Dakota County. He discussed SF2963, \$20 million bonding bill. The DNR is asking for money to upgrade four state parks for greater accessibility. What he didn't realize is that many of our State Parks are not widely accessible.

Staff: Mullin discussed the vacancies in the Parks and Natural Resource Department. He noted that the first-round interviews have been done for the Parks Planner position. The first-round interviews for the Parks Ambassador position will be starting next week. And, the Planning Analyst position will be posted soon.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary