

Minutes of the

METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Thursday, February 6, 2020

Committee Members Present: Cecily Harris, Todd Kemery, Rick Theisen, Tony Yarusso, Anthony Taylor, Jeremy Peichel, and Bob Moeller

Committee Members Absent: Margie Andreason and Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, liaison to the Council.

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 4:02 p.m. on Thursday, February 6, 2020.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the February 6, 2020 agenda. It was motioned by Moeller and seconded by Harris to approve the agenda. **The agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2019 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. It was motioned by Peichel and seconded by Kemery. **The minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

Holly Jenkins, Wilderness in the City, commented on secondary recreation activities in the regional parks and stated she is concerned with how these are defined in the Regional Parks Policy Plan. She feels the public does not have an opportunity to provide feedback. Her organization is concerned with secondary recreation activities being allowed rather than nature-based park usage. She stated that they would like to see the regional parks nature based.

Chair Yarusso referenced the informational discussion at the December 5, 2019 MPOSC meeting regarding regional trail and secondary recreational opportunities and asked if this topic would be coming back to this Commission. Mullin stated not until the next Regional Parks Policy Plan update.

Moeller stated he would like to see the relevant language in the Regional Parks Policy Plan ahead of any master plan decisions that would reference this language.

BUINESS

Appointment of Rick Theisen as Vice-Chair to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission for 2020 – Chair Yarusso

Chair Yarusso reviewed the bylaws of the Commission regarding the Chair naming a Vice Chair subject to the approval of the Commission.

Chair Yarusso motioned and it was seconded by Kemery that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission approve the appointment of Rick Theisen as the Commission's Vice-Chair for 2020.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **Motion carried.**

2020-48, Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board –
Colin Kelly, Parks Planning Analyst

Kelly gave a presentation on the Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan for approval as outlined in the materials provided. He shared two videos showing recommended secondary activities suggested through public engagement to be developed within the Shingle Creek trail corridor: Pickleball courts and Sepak Tawkra courts.

Kemery asked if the picnic areas are new or will they be updates of existing. Adam Arvidson, MPRB responded that they are refurbishments of existing picnic areas. Kemery stated he would like to see accessible picnic tables. Arvidson ensured Kemery that any renovations will include accessibility upgrades including paved pathways and accessible tables.

Kemery asked about the play areas and if those would be new or upgraded. Arvidson stated that the existing equipment will eventually be refurbished and will also meet accessibility requirements.

Kemery suggested a sensory type playground for autistic children.

Harris asked if Metropolitan Council funds could be used for the secondary uses within the Master Plan? Mullin noted that there are some elements that are in the gray area of what is eligible for Council funds. Elements, after discussion, may or may not be eligible.

Harris asked are there any concerns with the rising creek water levels considering a changing environment. Arvidson stated that this creek doesn't tend to flood in this section.

Moeller stated he feel that this is an exciting plan with the addition of Pickleball and Sepak Tawkra as it addresses changing demographics. He was concerned with policy and what is eligible for funding.

Taylor asked about partnerships for bike park, skate park and amphitheater, community garden, etc. Arvidson discussed recommitting to the existing skate park but not the bike park, however, the regional trail will provide biking opportunities and connections. He stated there isn't a partnership for an amphitheater, however, they are partnering with a nearby senior living center to help with the community garden.

Harris motioned and it was seconded by Taylor to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Require that Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, send preliminary plans to the Environmental Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division.

Chair Yarusso shared his reservations regarding the level of detail provided on the secondary activities proposed in this Master Plan. He discussed visits to local facilities connected to the trail, changes and impacts, and distribution of regional dollars for operations and maintenance based on visitor counts. He also discussed language in the Regional Parks Policy Plan (RPPP) regarding secondary activity usage and how this proposal meets the criteria.

Moeller noted that pickleball courts are much like tennis courts which are not amenities funded in regional parks. He shared Chair Yarusso's concern with visitor counts. He stated these are valid issues that coincide with changing demographics. Moeller stated he is inclined to table this issue.

Theisen asked how this relates to other agencies and how it compares to other requests.

Chair Yarusso discussed other areas where uses within a regional park are not eligible for funding.

Mullin discussed examples of locations and connections in other areas where agencies separate what can be funded with regional dollars and what needs to be funded with local dollars.

Taylor felt this plan is good because it did include a lot of community engagement. He talked about future discussions to decide whether uses are 'regional' and noted that the trail itself in this case is 'regional'.

Chair Yarusso stated that this Commission does not have the authority to modify a Master Plan.

Harris asked if she could modify her motion to approve the Master Plan minus certain parts subject to further discussion.

Chair Yarusso discussed several options. Harris withdrew her motion.

Mullin suggested adding a motion that any funding requests of non-traditional use come before the Commission separately.

Chair Yarusso felt identifying which activities are nontraditional would need to be listed in the master plan. He felt it would be better to have the modification to the master plan be done first. There was also discussion of MPRB submitting additional information regarding these proposed activities that could become an addendum to the Master Plan.

Chair Yarusso asked if one agency requests something and it is approved, does it become universal?

Moeller suggested one approach would be to ask staff take it back and bring it to the next meeting with clearer language for this proposal and future related approvals.

Chair Yarusso stated if we amend the RPPP and list activities, it is a very long process. He felt that the Commission could have a discussion for guidance to resolve this.

Arvidson asked if any of the play areas in the master plan do not meet the list for approval in the RPPP? Mullin stated that play areas are a recognized approved secondary activity.

Chair Yarusso discussed the criteria listed and seeing how one new thing could set precedence for other future development.

Kemery discussed the history of this trail and other activities that cropped up, i.e., baseball fields, etc. and asked who paid for those? He asked if MPRB will pay for new uses or will it be the city? Chair Yarusso noted, as it did not have a Master Plan before, no regional dollars were used.

Arvidson talked about the discussions they had on types of recreation to offer to draw people into the regional parks. He offered that the RPPP offers language that agencies are encouraged to bring forward ideas on ways to bring people into our regional park system with more diversity and inclusion.

Kemery asked if the plan is approved, does that mean the costs for development are also approved? Chair Yarusso replied, no, however, before development requests can be made the master plan must be approved, however an agency is never guaranteed reimbursement.

Chair Yarusso motioned:

1. To deny the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Instruct Minneapolis Park agency staff to address the concerns to spell out non-traditional facilities and activities referred to in the master plan as they relate to language on page 100 and 101 in the RPPP.
3. Ask Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board staff to address how excluded facilities would be handled in future visitation counts.

Peichel seconded the motion.

Moeller stated that he would prefer language that can be applied for future discussions. Chair Yarusso suggested adding this to our work plan.

Theisen felt that he would vote against the motion as the RPPP is sufficiently vague and the implementing agencies operated under that language.

Chair Yarusso read detailed language from the RPPP and explained the process to require agencies to go through to propose new activities and facilities (pages 100-101).

Theisen felt this comes forth under the current guidelines and changing the rules now is not appropriate.

Arvidson discussed how this master plan was developed to meet the goals of the RPPP. If not articulated well enough, they are willing to make the language more robust to show how these uses can fit. He stated they would be willing to work on it and bring it back to a future MPOSC meeting.

Taylor suggested noting that they have done a good job of expanding equity.

Harris asked what happens if the master plan is denied, will it still go to the Community Development Committee? Staff stated that it could, unless the implementing agency withdrew it.

Moeller called to question.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. Four voted in favor of the motion, two voted against it. **The motion carried.**

2020-49, Victory Memorial Memorial Regional Trail (Wirth Parkway segment) Master Plan Amendment, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board – Tracey Kinney, Parks Planner

Kinney gave a presentation on an amendment to the Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan as outlined in the materials provided.

Kemery asked about the ADA Transition Plan and where he can find it and what the timeline is. Arvidson explained that they have an organization-wide ADA Transition Plan, but he did not have specifics at this time. He stated they are allotting \$800,000.00 in their Capital Improvement Plan to address needs in the ADA Transition Plan for all Minneapolis Parks.

Kemery asked what is number one on the list? Arvidson stated priorities are accessible routes at recreations centers from ‘parking stall to bathroom stall’ (mostly in local parks). In regional parks, they are primarily looking at ADA parking and trail routes.

Moeller commented that he liked the graphic in the presentation that showed comments from people. He would like to see that in the packet in the future.

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

1. Approve Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail (Theodore Wirth Parkway Segment) Master Plan Amendment.
2. Require that Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, send preliminary plans to the Engineering Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council’s Environmental Services Division.

Chair Yarusso pointed out park like amenities within the trail.

Taylor commented on the sledding hill as an amenity and noted that it is what people asked for during engagement.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **Motion carried.**

2020-50, Rum River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment, Anoka County – Tracey Kinney, Parks Planner

Kinney gave a presentation on the Rum River Regional Trail Master Plan amendment outlined in the materials provided.

Kemery asked about the alternative route (figure 6) and clarified maps in the presentation. Karen Blaska, Anoka County Parks discussed the future development in St. Francis and working with them on trail development.

It was motioned by Peichel and seconded by Harris to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Anoka County's Rum River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Advise the County to consider the additional suggestions regarding placement and design of the trail contained at the end of this report.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **Motion carried.**

2020-58, Equity Analysis Requirement for Regional Park and Trail Master Planning – Tracey Kinney, Parks Planner

Kinney and Vandegrift gave a presentation on the Equity Analysis Requirement for the Regional Park and Trail Master Plans as outlined in the materials provided.

Peichel asked about a piloting period – is there going to be a test period and then it will be brought back for adjustments? Kinney stated that they are looking at a slow ramping up process to help agencies acclimate to this new requirement. This will be added to the RPPP at a future update. It is an addendum to the RPPP as it is mentioned already in the RPPP.

Harris asked about the 'Context' portion and asked how far back to agencies have to go regarding the history that created present-day inequitable outcomes? Kinney explained how the engagement would be done and what is expected for this context section. Vandegrift gave some examples. Staff also reminded Commissioners that training and technical support will be provided.

Harris asked what format in the master plan will this take. Staff explained that the implementing agencies will be adding a section to the master plans, similar to the other requirements for master planning.

Moeller asked what the implementing agencies say about the extra work to satisfy these requirements and discussed what this Commission's role should be when looking at this section. Vandegrift talked about the collaboration with the implementing agency planning staff in developing this requirement. She noted that this is a moment of growth for implementing agencies, MPOSC and Council staff. This will be an evolving process.

Moeller felt this is important work and feels collaboration is going to be key as well as learning from best practices is the way to go.

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

1. Approve the Equity Analysis Requirement for Park and Trail Master Plans as contained in this report with an effective date of June 1, 2020.
2. Advise Regional Parks Implementing Agencies that Park and Trail Master Plans submitted to the Council on or after June 1, 2020, will need to address the Equity Analysis Requirement.

Kemery stated that Scott County called him and asked if there will be a financial burden to the agencies. Vandegrift stated they don't anticipate any additional cost. It will just be a part of the process of doing master plan work and community engagement.

Mullin stated that Met Council staff will work with the implementing agencies with trainings, etc. to help them do this work.

Peichel added that theoretically there is a cost savings in broader engagement and getting it right the first time.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **Motion carried.**

INFORMATION

Draft Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission 2020 Workplan – Emmett Mullin, Manager Regional Parks and Natural Resources

Chair Yarusso asked if members would like to postpone the work plan discussion for a future meeting due to the time. Commission members felt it was a good idea.

Chair Yarusso made a motion to postpone the discussion of the MPOSC 2020 Workplan to a future meeting. It was seconded by Harris. **The motion carried.**

REPORTS

Chair: None.

Commissioners: Peichel discussed a presentation he attended at the Chamber of Commerce where they talked about work force amenities to draw people in and noted that parks is one way we are helping to make that happen.

Staff: Mullin discussed district vacancies in District C and District D. He noted interviews will be done in late February/ early March.

Mullin gave a brief update of the upcoming legislative session and noted that this is a Bonding year and that the Governor has included \$10 million for the Regional Parks System Bonding Program in his budget proposal.

Mullin reported on the Art Shanty project happening over the past several weekends out on Lake Harriet and noted it has been a very successful project!

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary