

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the  
METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION**

Thursday, July 9, 2020

**Committee Members Present:** Cecily Harris, Rick Theisen, Tony Yarusso, Todd Kemery, Jeremy Peichel, Nate Rich, Lolita Davis-Carter, Bob Moeller and Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, liaison to the Council.

**Committee Members Absent:** Anthony Taylor

**CALL TO ORDER**

With a quorum being present via WebEx, Committee Chair Yarusso called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:01 p.m. on Thursday, July 9, 2020.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

Chair Yarusso asked for a consensus to approve the July 9, 2020 agenda. **The agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the June 11, 2020 and June 18, 2020 minutes of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission.

It was motioned by Moeller and seconded by Harris to approve the June 11, 2020 minutes. Recording Secretary Dingle took a roll call vote.

Aye: 5 - Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Yarusso  
Nay: 0  
Abstention: 0

**The June 11, 2020 minutes were approved.**

It was motioned by Peichel and seconded by Kemery to approve the June 18, 2020 minutes. Recording Secretary Dingle took a roll call vote.

Aye: 5 - Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Yarusso  
Nay: 0  
Abstention: 0

**The June 18, 2020 minutes were approved.**

**PUBLIC INVITATION**

Chair Yarusso noted that the posted Agenda asked that anyone wishing to address the Commission should please email the Chair at [mposc@tonyyarusso.org](mailto:mposc@tonyyarusso.org).

Chair Yarusso read comments received from Linda Johnson regarding Lyndale Park Rose Garden. See attached.

Chair Yarusso read comments received from Holly Jenkins regarding the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. See attached.

**BUSINESS**

**2020-186, Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment, Three Rivers Park District - Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst**

Kelly gave a presentation on the Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment as outlined in the materials provided. He noted that it is a full replacement to the original Master Plan from 1972.

Kemery asked if there are a list of ADA projects included in the plan. Kelly stated that those details are outlined in the Master Plan. Ann Rexine, Three Rivers Park District, added that they have a list of all the improvements and that she could forward it. She highlighted a few of the ADA improvements from the plan. Kemery discussed using a measurement tool on trails to ensure their density/firmness is ADA compliant and stated he would connect with Rexine offline.

Theisen asked if there is a difference between the Three River's proposal and Council staff's recommendation. Kelly stated that the proposed actions are modeled after the Pine Point Regional Park which has a similar situation with a pending boundary adjustment.

Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District stated he reached out with a proposed revision to the first and second proposed actions and discussed the drafted language that he sent to Mullin. The language combines the first two actions.

Yarusso clarified that the first action approves the master plan and is not affected by the boundary adjustment. Kelly confirmed.

Peichel asked about the Community Development division's comments regarding Euro American culture's exploitative mismanagement and asked if that was integrated in any way into the engagement and shaping the Master Plan. Kelly noted that what Peichel references is on page 15 of the staff report and includes comments from Community Development's Local Planning Assistance unit. He noted that these comments have not resulted in a change to the proposed actions and have not shaped community engagement.

Peichel discussed service access and lack of transit to this park reserve and asked if there are plans to join the transit system. Vlaming stated this is the purview of the Met Council's role in equitable transit systems. In this case, he added, this park is at the very edge of the 7-county region and it is probably not likely to get the ridership needed to support transit in this area. He noted that the Council does strive to provide transit wherever possible, including to regional parks.

Peichel understood but discussed park programing and plans to do programing to get more people out to the parks. Vlaming agreed and discussed programs with local libraries and Three Rivers busing programs to achieve this.

Harris noted that in the development concept, it talks about this being a park reserve versus a regional park and asked what the typical buildout level is – she asked what the difference was. Mullin explained that the purpose of park reserves are land and habitat conservation and at least 80% of the total boundary area must be preserved and left natural. He added that the same can be true of some regional parks and gave Lebanon Hills Regional Park as an example.

Kelly Grissman, Three Rivers Park District stated she feels this is a key concept behind the recreational opportunity spectrum, and stated it is Three Rivers' goal to is provide recreational and nature-based experiences across this spectrum. She noted that not all parks will serve all people. They strive to ensure a diversity of opportunities for a diversity of interests.

Chair Yarusso discussed the differences and importance of setting aside enough land to achieve these goals.

Atlas-Ingebretson noted the importance of desegregating the engagement information when conducting master planning engagement efforts, not just "aggregating" all people of color. She added to Peichel's comments regarding transit and programing and noted the type of programing that may entice people to come is crucial as well as providing programing after 5pm and on weekends. Grissman stated that is their intent moving forward.

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

1. Approve the Crow-Hassan Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment with approval of the proposed boundary adjustment of 179.85 acres being contingent on its inclusion in the 2020 Policy Plan Amendment currently under development.
2. Require that the Agency update the Master Plan to remove the characterization of the parcel north of 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue, North as “surplus”.
3. Require Three Rivers Park District, prior to initiating any new development of the park reserve or the Crow River Regional Trail adjacent to or in the vicinity of the park reserve, to send preliminary plans to the Engineering Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the existing and planned regional interceptor system and other critical wastewater infrastructure.

Secretary Dingle did a roll call vote.

Aye: 7 - Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Theisen, Yarusso

Nay: 0

Abstention: 1 – Davis Carter

**The motion was approved**

**2020-187, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Crow-Hassan Park Reserve (Berning), Three Rivers Park District - Jessica Lee, Senior Planner**

Lee gave a presentation on the request for a Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Crow-Hassan Park Reserve from Three Rivers Park District as outlined in the materials provided.

Moeller asked whether the moving and repurposing of the house was explored. Heather Kuikka, Three Rivers Park District, stated that the house had too many outstanding issues to bring up to code to make it viable.

Chair Yarusso inquired about the purchase agreement and whether the contingency of approval from Rogers was received and approved. Kuikka stated it was. Chair Yarusso asked for that to be included in the report to the Community Development Committee.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$326,625 to Three Rivers Park District to acquire the 0.97-acre Berning property located at 26260 141<sup>st</sup> Avenue North in the City of Rogers for Crow-Hassan Park Reserve, contingent on Council approval of the July 2020 Special Budget Amendment, Business Item 2020-182 JT.
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 \$108,875 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Bonding Program for costs associated with their local match.
4. Inform Three Rivers Park District that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that the Council will grant future reimbursement and that expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

Secretary Dingle did a roll call vote.

Aye: 8 - Carter Davis, Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Theisen, Yarusso

Nay: 0

Abstention: 0

**The motion was approved**

**2020-188, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Grey Cloud Island Regional Park (Kulvich), Washington County - Jessica Lee, Senior Planner**

Lee gave a presentation on a request from Washington County for a Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Grey Cloud Island Regional Park as outlined in materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked why the Met Council wasn't listed as the intended user on the appraisal. Lee stated she will look into this but thought it was standard language and that the Met Council was listed as an intended user in the full appraisal report. Chair Yarusso asked that it be resolved before going to the Community Development Committee. He noted the purchase agreement expires before the closing date. Lee stated that the actual purchase agreement does not expire prior to the closing date. That was an error on the application.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$261,525 to Washington County to acquire the 41.15-acre Kulvich property located at 11523 Grey Cloud Trail South in the City of Cottage Grove for Grey Cloud Island Regional Park, contingent on Council approval of the July 2020 Special Budget Amendment, Business Item 2020-182 JT.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Chair Yarusso motioned to amend the staff recommendation to add 'contingent on Council approval of July 2020 Special Budget Amendment, Business Item 2020-182 JT and the closing occurs prior to the expiration of the purchase agreement.' It was seconded by Theisen.

Secretary Dingle did a roll call vote on the amendment.

Aye: 8 - Carter Davis, Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Theisen, Yarusso

Nay: 0

Abstention: 0

**The motion was approved.**

Secretary Dingle did a roll call vote on the staff recommendations with the approved amendment.

Aye: 8 - Carter Davis, Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Theisen, Yarusso

Nay: 0

Abstention: 0

**The motion was approved**

**2020-189, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Bald Eagle-Otter Lake Regional Park (Spencer), Ramsey County - Jessica Lee, Senior Planner**

Lee gave a presentation on the request from Ramsey County for the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Bald Eagle-Otter Lake Regional Park as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked about the 2-year lease and if the enterprise uses are acceptable and also what happens to revenue from the lease. Lee stated the 2-year lease provides the landowner time to find a new home. There is no anticipated income. As such the arrangement is acceptable.

Mullin stated that staff have looked at these questions and have latitude, for example, to use life estates to ensure, in the long run, the land will become part of the regional system in perpetuity.

Scott Yonke, Ramsey County stated that the arrangement provides up to two-years, to give the homeowner time to find another property. He noted they have put in an offer on another property, so their need to reside in the current location may not be necessary for long. Also, he noted there is no money being exchanged.

Chair Yarusso asked staff to ensure this happens as planned.

Peichel gave examples of federal policy in this type of arrangement.

Yonke noted appraisal was done prior to the negotiation. Chair Yarusso noted appraised value is the same as the purchase price.

Kemery asked about the property with well and septic and asked – what is the cost for cleanup and sealing the well. Yonke discussed remediation done as part of the stewardship cost to restore the area to native vegetation.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$291,960 to Ramsey County to acquire the 0.6-acre Spencer property located at 5600 Otter Lake Road in White Bear Township for Bald Eagle-Otter Lake Regional Park, contingent on Council approval of the July 2020 Special Budget Amendment, Business Item 2020-182 JT.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.
3. Consider reimbursing Ramsey County up to \$97,320 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Bonding Program for costs associated with their local match.
4. Inform Ramsey County that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that the Council will grant future reimbursement and that expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

Secretary Dingle did a roll call vote.

Aye: 7 – Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Theisen, Yarusso

Nay: 0

Abstention: 1 – Carter Davis

**The motion was approved**

### **2020-170, Annual Metropolitan Regional Parks System Operation and Maintenance Allocation - Abdiwahab Ali, Financial Analyst**

Ali gave a presentation on the Annual Metropolitan Regional Parks System Operation and Maintenance Allocation as outlined in the materials provided.

Peichel asked what year was the '40%' number put into law. Ali stated he could look into this question and get back to the Commissioner.

Chair Yarusso discussed emails regarding statutory requirement to report operations and maintenance expenses (today's actions). He noted we also have to report them to the Council. In the past the Met Council has simply "cut a check" to the ten agencies. This year the Council has stated that they need to establish a grant agreement for the grant awards in which case he believes the MPOSC has to recommend the grant.

Heather Aagesen-Huebner, Finance Director, added background and stated these agreements are 'housekeeping items' to delegate signature authority to the Council. She reviewed the statute and noted these are operating funds and not in reference to acquiring land or developing facilities.

Chair Yarusso asked about Legacy Funds that can be used for operations. Aagesen-Huebner discussed statute 473.315 that talks about acquiring and developing recreation and open space. She stated she could follow up with other statutes.

Chair Yarusso stated he struggles with grants going out without MPOSC's review and recommendation as we have not done that before. Aagesen-Huebner explained these grants do not require the discretion like acquisition and development grants. Chair Yarusso was still concerned with discretion being necessary for the use of these funds.

Peichel felt we could do a recommendation of approval to be forwarded to the Council for approval/execution.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked how this been done in the past, and if things have changed, she stated we need to be transparent about what has changed and why. Aagesen-Huebner discussed the history of pass-through funds where there are not grant agreements with specific dollar amounts. She noted that we are not required to have agreements for these types of expenditures however best practice suggests that we have these types of agreements in place to reflect that we will pass through the funds.

Lisa Barajas, Director Community Development stated that this change is part of our Council's 'process improvements' to be clear, transparent and use best practices. These are more contractual in nature than most parks grant making.

Atlas-Ingebretson stated she was told there was a scheduling issue and asked - have we done it this way in the past. Barajas responded no but this is a best practice.

Chair Yarusso felt there may be need for further discussion on this topic, as he is still not comfortable. Peichel agreed and would like further discussion and clarification.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked for a meeting with Chair Lilligren (CDC) and Chair Yarusso to discuss further. Barajas stated she could make that happen.

Chair Yarusso reviewed the proposed action.

It was motioned by Peichel and seconded by Harris to recommend that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission reports to the Metropolitan Council the Regional Parks System state fiscal year 2021 Operation and Maintenance funding requests.

Secretary Dingle did a roll call vote.

Aye: 7 – Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Theisen, Yarusso

Nay: 0

Abstention: 1 – Carter Davis

**The motion was approved**

## **INFORMATION**

**2019 Regional Park System Annual Use Estimate** - Darcie Vandegrift, Principal Researcher

Vandegrift gave a presentation on the 2019 Regional Park System Annual Use Estimates as outlined in the materials provided.

Peichel asked what streetlight data is. Vandegrift explained it is "anonymized" cell phone data that can be used to extrapolate visitation information.

Kemery asked if the 2020 counting was not done due to COVID. Vandegrift stated yes.

Kemery asked if staff are expecting more or less visitation after COVID. Vandegrift stated in her opinion (not scientific) we've observed park usage is extensive – probably due to 'cabin fever'. She is hoping that next summer a count can be done safely, and she is hopeful that increased usage will continue.

## **REPORTS**

**Chair:** Chair Yarusso noted that the Square Lake Master Planning process has begun, and the public engagement is being done online.

**Commissioners:** None.

**Staff:** Mullin stated that the Governor has called for a second special session and staff are hopeful a bonding bill for the Regional Parks Bonding Program will be passed.

Mullin reminded Commissioners that there will be a second MPOSC meeting this month on July 15, 2020, to discuss the System Additions process.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

Sandi Dingle  
Recording Secretary

**Two Comments read to the Commission During the Public Invitation**



**From:** [Tony Yarusso, MPOSC Chair](#)  
**To:** [Dingle, Sandi](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Could you read this in Open Comments at the July 9 meeting.  
**Date:** Thursday, July 09, 2020 4:22:38 PM

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----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Linda Johnson** <[eljai76@yahoo.com](mailto:eljai76@yahoo.com)>  
**Date:** Tue, Jul 7, 2020 at 8:30 AM  
**Subject:** Could you read this in Open Comments at the July 9 meeting.  
**To:** Tony Yarusso <[mposc@tonyyarusso.org](mailto:mposc@tonyyarusso.org)>

Commissioners,

Do me a favor? When you have a visitor, would you take them to the Lyndale Park Rose Garden?

The Lyndale Park Rose Garden is one of Minneapolis' oldest parks. This garden, the second oldest public Rose garden in the country, with over 2,500 Rose bushes.

Maybe you see no one tending the garden. Or a Rose Gardener and two Rose garden staff pulling out weeds and eventually one suffers heat stress. Or 5 elderly volunteers, all over 65, pruning Roses. This is very unacceptable.

The Lyndale Park Rose Garden needs your help.

For the Rose garden to last for generations, it takes extra efforts. More effort than just mowing the lawn. For beautiful Roses to bloom: the Rose hips must be pruned every day, and the weeds must be pulled.

With over 2,500 Rose bushes, this Rose garden needs more than one Rose Gardener. But volunteers for a weekly total of 3 hours cannot fill the gap. That is why Voices of the Roses is proposing 5 additional Rose Gardeners for a weekly total of 225 hours, and other services, for an estimated \$700,000.

The Rose garden meets two of the Strategic pillars of the 25 Year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan: 'Taking care of what we have' and 'Connecting people to the outdoors'.

We have had this Rose garden for more than 110 years. There is space to spread out, relax and enjoy the outdoors. Can we help this garden last another 110 years?

Linda Johnson



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Linda Johnson  
Voices of the Roses  
612-866-4664

**Caution! This email was sent from an external source. Do not click any links or open attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.**

DATE: July 9, 2020

TO: MPOSC Members

FROM: Holly Jenkins, Director, Wilderness in the City

RE: Public Comment for Item Not on the Agenda

For the Regional Parks System, what will be our Legacy – more built infrastructure to take care of, or a well-maintained, nature-based parks system?

When asked, people consistently choose a well-maintained, nature-based parks system ahead of more built infrastructure. This is reflected in the 25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan's overarching vision to preserving nature and inspiring the next generation of stewards. Yet this underlying theme is often not reflected in the proposals that come before you for this fund.

This year, you will again be asked to recommend a list of projects proposed by IAs for their appropriation of Parks and Trails Legacy dollars. You will again be told that their requests meet the criteria for the 25-year plan, and also the regional parks policy plan and therefore the proposals should be recommended.

However, those plans are both subject to interpretation and as such your role is far more crucial than simply rubber-stamping the project list.

This year, when you review the Parks and Trails Legacy proposed projects, consider the reason people voted for the Legacy amendment. Consider the annual costs for maintenance which continue to increase every year without a dedicated source of funding. Consider that new built infrastructure further increases these annual costs. And also consider that the unfunded maintenance in our parks, as exemplified by the comment today from Linda Johnson regarding the Lyndale Park Rose Garden, cannot be filled by volunteers alone.

Then consider, for our regional parks system, what will be our Legacy.