

Minutes of the Meeting of the

METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Thursday, November 5, 2020

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

Committee Members Absent: Nate Rich

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Dingle did a roll call for a quorum.

Present: 7 at the time of the roll call. Note: one member (Taylor) joined immediately following the roll call.

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, November 5, 2020.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a consensus to approve the November 5, 2020 agenda. **The agenda was approved.**

With a quorum present, Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the October 1, 2020 minutes. Moeller motioned and it was seconded by Davis Carter to approve the October 1, 2020 minutes of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting. Secretary Dingle issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 7 (Carter, Harris, Moeller, Peichel, Taylor, Theisen, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 1 (Kemery)

The October 1, 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. He noted that no one wished to address the Commission.

BUSINESS

None.

INFORMATION

Public Comment and Engagement Pilot Update for the Draft Amendment to the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan – Emmett Mullin, Ellie Hohulin, and Tracey Kelly

Mullin began the presentation and recognized Greg Ricci for upgrading the format for participants. He noted that we are here this afternoon to discuss the public comment portion of the Regional Parks Policy Plan Amendment process, as outlined in the presentation shown. He stated Tracey Kinney and Ellie Hohulin will also present on this topic.

Kinney continued and discussed the public comment log report, providing highlights of what we comments we received. She also reviewed the demographic analysis to the survey and discussed an engagement pilot effort to reach new non-traditional audiences.

Hohulin discussed additional outreach and engagement done with many organizations listed in the presentation. She also shared about the video challenge that was part of this process.

Kinney discussed next steps outlined in the presentation.

Mullin stated staff will 'tee' up areas where we're looking for additional insights at the joint CDC/MPOSC meeting on November 16, 2020.

Atlas-Ingebretson stated she's grateful for the work and planning that was done for this effort, however, she is disappointed in the lack of representation of responses from diverse populations – so the question may be – have others reflected on this concern? She then asked, what are other's thoughts on the lack of representative voices in the on-line survey? She noted staff may want to ask the implementing agencies as well.

Kinney agreed and noted that demographic analysis only covers survey responses. This approach may not be the best tool to gather input for underserved populations. She also mentioned that this is a baseline analysis that hasn't been done before and we have more to learn.

Atlas-Ingebretson shared her experience with surveys in general, which is that they are not very inclusive. This presents an opportunity for how we can do it differently next time. She suggested we have to figure out a new way of doing reaching a more representative audience – maybe a mix of approaches, or another tool, etc.

Chair Yarusso asked Atlas-Ingebretson, when doing public engagement on other areas, i.e., transportation, has she seen better participation? Atlas-Ingebretson stated no, it was probably worse. She believes this is a consistent issue across the government sector and not just a Metropolitan Council issue.

Mullin noted that at the beginning of this process, Atlas-Ingebretson challenged staff to exercise our 'outreach muscle', reaching beyond traditional audiences and approaches. He feels staff rose to that challenge and discussed many of the non-traditional efforts put forth during this process.

Davis Carter asked, have we ever asked community members how they would prefer to be reached? What tool would work best for them? Vandegriff responded that was a big part of the pilot project. Staff asked many diverse groups how they wanted to be engaged and this resulted in many great public conversations and comment letters. We hope this demographic analysis provides evidence of why the pilot program was necessary. She discussed the work the interns did as well and she expressed a desire to build on this. She stated that this process is challenging and it would help to have additional funds to continue this engagement work.

Harris complemented staff and noted that this has all been done during a pandemic. She feels there are certain communities that are hard to reach. She discussed reaching out to civic groups that are respected in the community and have relationships with the audiences we seek to reach.

Moeller added that he appreciates the work that staff has done and yet also feel disappointed with the low input from minority communities. He suggested going into schools with diverse populations. He noted that COVID has definitely added to the challenge.

Taylor asked about additional resources, what does that mean? Kinney responded that we are looking for more staff/budget in order to expand our reach.

Taylor complimented staff as well on their thoughtfulness and commitment. He stated we need to identify organizations that we want to build a better relationship with and they suggested that we need to start now to develop those relationships prior to asking for their engagement.

Atlas-Ingebretson echoed these comments. She suggested that it would be helpful to update our presentation to provide policy makers with a deeper understanding of the how/what/ and why methods were used.

Chair Yarusso referred to a question in the chat section from Harris – did the implementing agencies put a survey link on their websites or in their newsletters? Mullin stated a number of agencies shared the link and it had different levels of success.

Davis Carter feels sometimes we go back to the same organizations time and again. Sometimes we need to think outside the box, i.e., homeless populations, troubled youth, etc.

Mullin referred to a question in the chat – is geographical demographic information collected from the survey respondents. He noted this is being prepared and will be shared soon.

Mullin thanked the Commissioners and Atlas-Ingebretson for all their comments and insights. He noted we are committed to continue the work to build new relationships.

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso noted that several Commissioner's terms are up and asked those Commissioners to consider reapplying and to work with staff on this.

Chair Yarusso discussed the bonding bill that passed and noted that he is bothered that several agencies got direct appropriations and bypassed the State Bonding Program process. He felt we need to have a difficult conversation about this.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Mullin discussed the MPOSC seats that are up appointment in Districts A, B, C, and D, and also the Chair's position. He noted that Rick Theisen is looking to retire and thanked him for all his work on this commission. He hoped that all the others would consider reapplying. The current MPOSC members will serve through January. Our plan is to have the new commissioners seated by the February MPOSC meeting.

Mullin reminded Commissioners that a joint meeting with the Community Development Committee will be held on 10/16/2020 to discuss public comments received.

Mullin gave a high-level summary of Minnesota's election as it relates to the State Legislature, and he noted the House and Senate majorities did not change in either body.

Chair Yarusso encouraged Commissioners up for reappointment to reapply and also noted that the LCCMR is looking for applicants.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 5:19 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary