

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

Thursday, June 18, 2020

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

Committee Members Absent: None.

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 4:03 p.m. on Thursday, June 18, 2020.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a consensus to approve the June 18, 2020 agenda. **The agenda was approved.**

There were no minutes to approve at this meeting. The June 11 and June 18, 2020 minutes will be brought for approval at the July 9, 2020 MPOSC Meeting.

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.

Chair Yarusso noted that he did not receive any emails prior to this meeting.

BUSINESS

2020-170, Regional Parks System Annual Operations and Maintenance Report - Abdiwahab Ali, Financial Analyst

Ali gave a preliminary overview of the Regional Parks System Annual Operations and Maintenance Report as outlined in the materials provided. He noted the allocation report will be brought back to this Commission in July.

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 (it was noted that two MPOSC Members were not yet present)

Nay = 0

The motion was approved.

INFORMATION

Regional Parks System Additions. Implementing Agency Proposals (Part II of II) – Emmett Mullin, Manager Parks, Colin Kelly, Parks Planning Analyst

Mullin thanked all Commissioners for participating in this process. He stated that today, staff are asking Commissioners to review 16 proposals from three implementing agencies (IA's), Scott County, Three Rivers Park District, and the City of Saint Paul. He reminded Commissioners that the purpose of the system

addition process is to consider designation of new units to the system. After the designation, the implementing agency will develop a Master Plan (MP) prior to receiving Regional Parks System funding. Once the MP is complete and approved that addition will be eligible for funding. He gave a brief overview of the 28 system addition proposals from the 8 IA's shown in the materials provided.

Mullin discussed a second July MPOSC meeting to review the recommended additions.

Kelly reviewed proposals to be looked at today from Scott County, Three Rivers Park District, and the City of St. Paul. He introduced Patti Freeman, Scott County first.

Freeman reviewed the first proposal – Lake Marion to Scott West Regional Trail Corridor as outlined in the materials provided.

Kemery asked whether this trail go over water. Freeman believes there is a wetland, which will require development of a boardwalk feature.

Moeller stated this looks like a great project.

Harris agreed with Moeller but asked about vague language, i.e., the proposed 3-6 miles of regional trail. Also, she asked whether the trail would go through Murphy-Hanrehan Park Reserve. Freeman responded that they would like the public's help to decide the trail alignment, which will affect the length of the trail. She said this will be a destination trail that may meander through the park reserve.

Taylor asked about connections to the mountain biking facility at Murphy-Hanrehan and also about the engagement efforts to look at the history of the area, specifically the history of the indigenous people. Freeman responded that they need to work with Three Rivers Park District on the trail alignments/connections as well as the associated communities. She added, as far as new users, the goal is definitely to develop partnerships to engage people.

Freeman discussed the second proposal – Cedar Lake Farm to New Prague Destination Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris stated this is a great project and appreciated the connection with the Public Health Department. Freeman thanked Alysa Delgado, Scott County, who is a new employee and helped put this proposal together.

Kemery likes the additional opportunities for paved trails and appreciates these proposals and Scott County's direction.

Taylor asked if there are any traffic counts and does Scott County envision a continued collaboration with Three Rivers Park District. Freeman stated there are no bike counts and they will definitely continue to collaborate with Three Rivers.

Kelly introduced Three Rivers Park District (TRPD) and 11 proposals with four varieties – two Regional Park Search Areas, one Special Recreation Feature Search Area, six Regional Trail Search Corridors, two Boundary Adjustments.

Kelly Grissman, TRPD reviewed the 1st proposal – Weaver Lake Regional Trail Search Corridor, as outlined in the materials provided. There were no comments.

Grissman reviewed the 2nd proposal – Eagle Lake to Bryant Lake Regional Trail Extension Search Corridor as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso commented that this proposal would help address the freeway barrier and noted that the service area provides a good balance of equity.

Kemery asked how does navigation under/over the freeway work? Grissman stated the trail will most likely be going under the freeway.

Grissman reviewed the 3rd proposal – Gray's Bay Regional Trail Extension Search Corridor as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso discussed spacing requirements for regional trails, and concerns about this proposal. TRPD is has multiple North-South proposals in this area. He asked does it make sense to pursue all of these trails, particularly when there are concerns about the region's ability to complete the full system.

Moeller stated this is a great question and observation. He remembers a trail east of this proposal and doesn't know what we stand to gain or lose by including it.

Kemery noted that in the presentation, there is a dashed line to the west and asked what it was. Grissman stated it is Diamond Lake Regional Trail Search Corridor. She noted they're currently doing a MP for it. She also noted they are working on a master plan to the east - Medicine Lake, and to the south Eagle Bryant Lake.

Kemery asked which is more difficult – proposal 3 or Diamond Lake Regional Trail? He asked if TRPD would like to give up one? Jonathan Vlaming, TRPD responded they are all a part of the Regional Trail Comprehensive Plan done with Hennepin County 6 years ago, where they looked at development and populations. He suggested looking at all these trails as a comprehensive network. Regarding how much TRPD can afford – the majority of the operations costs will be paid by TRPD and they have the Board's support.

Taylor stated he remembers when TRPD came with a lot of miles of bike trails search corridor proposals. Vlaming responded that this proposal is a continuation of an existing trail system.

Grissman reviewed the fourth proposal – Silverwood Regional Trail Connector Search Corridor, as outlined in the materials provided.

Davis-Carter asked when this project is fully completed, how will it serve as a model for the entire Regional Parks System. Chair Yarusso stated he was not really sure.

Harris responded to Chair Yarusso's question – as TRPD has a 2040 plan which is 20 years out. How do we reconcile this plan with MnDOT's plans and DNR and city trails plans? Will freeways look different in 2040? Vlaming responded that the TRPD/Hennepin County plan was developed with input from MnDOT and the DNR.

Grissman stated part of their planning was always to invite partners to the table.

Harris asked if this was a 'big picture' for the entire Metropolitan Council region? Vlaming responded (in the chat) that the Regional Trail network is also a transportation network. The Metropolitan Council has a strong commitment to addressing climate change. One way to do that is to adjust the federal transportation funding to provide greater federal funds to bike/ped projects.

Kelly discussed the Regional Parks Policy Plan (RPPP) Chapter 5 Policy 1, master planning requirements. The implementing agencies are expected to involve partners in master plan development, i.e., MnDOT, DNR, local jurisdictions, etc.

Grissman reviewed the 5th proposal – Purgatory Creek Regional Trail Extension Search Corridor as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked if there is an existing parkway nearby. Grissman stated as a part of the MP process, TRPD will evaluate the detailed alignment options, including parkways and local trails.

Grissman reviewed the 6th proposal – Lake Sarah Regional Trail Extension Search Corridor, as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked if there is a bridge over the Crow River? Grissman stated yes and discussed connections into Wright County.

Grissman reviewed the 7th proposal – Rogers-Corcoran Regional Park Search Area as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked about TRPD's goals to decrease development pressure on Crow Hassan. Grissman stated they are requesting two additions in this area. A portion of the proposed expansion of

Crow Hassan is 25+ years out, as it will be mined first. In the short-term, this proposed development of a regional park will provide additional recreational opportunities for this area.

Chair Yarusso noted to staff that it would be helpful to track timelines, to understand how we're adding to the system across different decades.

Grissman reviewed the 8th proposal – Minnetonka and Minnehaha Creek Regional Park Search Area, as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso noted this is similar to the request from Anoka County. Grissman said yes, and it's a great way to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves.

Chair Yarusso feels these are great proposals but would like there to be more direction in our RPPP about "river parks".

Peichel asked if we can cover some of this when the MP comes forward.

Chair Yarusso stated there should be something in the RPPP – the details can be put into the master planning process. He noted the update to the RPPP can take up to a year.

Peichel asked when is the next update for the RPPP? Mullin stated that the next update would be 2024. Generally speaking, the development of RPPP policy should proceed development of proposals. He discussed the possibility to develop interim policy to guide these types of proposals. He stated he will get back to the Commission on this point.

Vlaming stated that the RPPP does have a policy regarding waterways. He feels the policy is intentionally vague and stated if this proposal meets that intent, it should be supported. Mullin thanked Vlaming for his comments and stated he will look into this.

Chair Yarusso acknowledged that waterways are recognized for the DNR but was not sure if that is true for our purposes.

Vlaming reviewed the 9th proposal – First Ring Special Recreation Feature Search Area, as outlined in the materials provided.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked for an outline of what might be considered bridging facilities. Vlaming discussed examples that could be included, i.e., mini-natural area, mountain biking training, art parks, and more. There are many ideas. He stated this would be a collaborative effort with many groups including the Council.

Moeller stated he thinks this is exciting because it is open.

Harris agreed but asked if we have finished defining what a bridging facility is. She asked does it need to be added as a proposal now or could it be added later? Chair Yarusso stated we have a definition and stated a system addition would be the only way to do it.

Mullin noted Davis-Carter's question in the chat – what is process of removing barriers and expanding focus and diversity offerings.

Harris stated (in the chat) – lets add water trails to our policy. She served on a Water Trails Board and can provide input.

Vlaming stated distance is a primary barrier. He discussed engagements that can be done and also connecting with cities to determine what is feasible and where can we put it.

Kelly noted in the chat that Water Trails are only referenced in relation to the Mississippi National River Recreation Area and State Parks, Lands and Trails on page 34 of the RPPP currently. Atlas-Ingebretson discussed the systemic inequities that exist in our region.

Rich asked for some clarity on timing. He stated he thinks he read that we could be as far as five years away from specific proposals (i.e., bridging facilities) and cost estimates? Vlaming stated they've

already started. They are marching ahead based on what they are hearing from constituents and gave several examples.

Harris asked – can a bridging facility be added as part of a MP or just a special recreation feature? Chair Yarusso explained a bridging facility is a special recreation feature and will need a MP.

Grissman reviewed the tenth proposal – Crow Hassan Park Reserve Boundary Adjustment as outlined in the materials provided.

In the chat, Vlaming stated that TRPD is prepared to start the master plan for the First Ring Initiative as soon as the pandemic allows for in-person outreach. He stated they will move as fast as possible to implement.

Harris asked about equitable usage – and will this be delayed if the proposal is 25 years out?

Grissman responded it serves more older adults and more women than men. They want to continue to attract this audience, yet they also want to expand their reach to serve larger audiences without taking away from current users.

Atlas-Ingebretson cautioned language used that feels disrespectful. Chair Yarusso asked for more specifics. Atlas-Ingebretson responded characterizing visitors as less privileged and more apt to be displaced can feel disrespectful. Moeller asked if we don't use the term 'underserved' – what's more appropriate? Atlas-Ingebretson stated equity and displacement is more what she was referring to. She stated that if the language is accurate, use it. It's important to be clear on equity versus equality.

Grissman reviewed the eleventh proposal – Gale Woods Farm Special Recreational Feature Boundary Adjustment, as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked about urban heat island affect reduction. Grissman stated there won't be concrete or bituminous to absorb heat on the proposed expansion.

Kelly introduced the three proposals for the City of St. Paul.

Paul Sawyer, City of St. Paul reviewed the first proposal – Mississippi Gorge – Samuel Morgan/ "Midtown Greenway Extension" Regional Trail Search Corridor, as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked about the separation between this proposal and the Summit Avenue Regional Trail. Sawyer stated because there's no MP, we don't know yet. He added the proposal will be a much different experience for the user – along the railway in a wooded valley and not adjacent to the street.

Taylor feels this is a needed route and is very supportive of this. He asked if there is any information on feasibility study that was done for the Midway Greenway regarding the bridge over the Mississippi River. Sawyer hasn't read the study but believes it would be possible to use this bridge if it is abandoned.

Mullin did look at the feasibility study and feels there's potential for this connection but there is more work to do on the cost estimate and partner outreach.

Sawyer reviewed the second proposal – Hidden Falls – Samuel Morgan / "Ford Spur" Regional Trail Search Corridor.

Chair Yarusso asked whether this rail corridor is already marked as abandoned, and also asked if it is for sale? Sawyer does not believe that it has been formally been abandoned. Chair Yarusso explained this is a great opportunity given future development plans, particularly at the Ford Site.

Sawyer reviewed the third proposal – Grand Round – Lake Elmo Regional Trail Search Corridor as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso stated this is between Ramsey County (Saint Paul) and Washington County and asked if Maplewood has been involved. Sawyer stated they are supportive but have not come forward as an active partner. These details will be worked out during the MP process.

Chair Yarusso stated there would potentially be a joint powers agreement with Ramsey County to operate the trail (1 mile). He is concerned about the timeframe and asked if there is any possibility of creating a connection in the interim? Sawyer discussed options and said Saint Paul is looking for short-term connections and options.

Taylor stated he has been disappointed with the political will of these challenging projects and stated we need to ask - what can I do, or we do, to help with this process and gain community support.

Sawyer stated there's been significant development over the past 4-5 years with the adoption of the Saint Paul bike/pedestrian plan. It ultimately comes down to financing and this is where much difficulty lies. Funding is imperative and the political will is there.

Taylor asked is there a community-based organization that can help and stated this could be discussed further outside of the meeting. He added that this proposal is important to the community. Sawyer stated he appreciates the comments and is happy have further conversations.

Mullin stated this has been a long road and thanked all for their participation in this significant effort. He stated draft recommendations will be brought back in July.

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso reminded commissioners to respond to the poll sent regarding a second meeting in July.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Mullin noted that we are in a special legislative session and this is a bonding year and the Governor has forwarded a \$10 million request for bonding that is still under consideration.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary