

Minutes of the Meeting of the

METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Thursday, October 7, 2021

Committee Members Present: Assata Brown, Cecily Harris, Monica Dillenburg, Robert Moeller, Tony Yarusso, Cana Yang, Jeremy Peichel, and Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, liaison to the Council

Committee Members Absent: Todd Kemery, Anthony Taylor

CALL TO ORDER

The Recording Secretary did a roll call for a quorum.

Present – 7 (Brown, Dillenburg, Harris, Moeller, Peichel, Yang, Yarusso)

Absent – 2 (Kemery, Taylor)

With a quorum being present via WebEx, Commission Chair Yarusso called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:01 p.m. on Thursday, October 7, 2021.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso motioned to approve the October 7, 2021, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission agenda and asked for a consensus to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved by consensus.

Next, Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the September 2, 2021 minutes. Peichel motioned, and it was seconded by Harris to approve the September 2, 2021 minutes of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting.

The Recording Secretary issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 6 (Brown, Dillenburg, Harris, Kemery, Yang, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 1 (Peichel)

The motion was approved.

PUBLIC INVITATION

Chair Yarusso stated we have no people who pre-registered to speak today. As a reminder, if you wish to offer public comment at a virtual meeting, please pre-register by emailing public.info@metc.state.mn.us. You may also send us your comments by email.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson announced that she is resigning from the Metropolitan Council for personal and professional reasons. She thanked all of the Commissioners and the Chair for their work. Also, she thanked staff for their support.

BUSINESS

2021-264 - Request for Consent to Easement, Carver Park Reserve, Three Rivers Park District -

Jessica Lee, Senior Planner

Lee gave a presentation on a request from Three Rivers Park District for consent to an easement at Carver Park Reserve as outlined in the materials provided.

A motion was made by Moeller and seconded by Dillenburg to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Consent to Three Rivers Park District granting an easement, as described in the Attachment, to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for groundwater monitoring at Carver Park Reserve.
2. Require Three Rivers Park District to record a Consent to Easement document executed by the Metropolitan Council's Regional Administrator.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote. The recording secretary issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 9 (Brown, Harris, Dillenburg, Moeller, Kemery, Peichel, Taylor, Yang, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 0

The motion was approved.

INFORMATION

Regional Parks System Marketing and Communications Study with CCF - Emmett Mullin, Manager Parks, Amanda Lovelee, Parks Ambassador, and Michelle Fure, Manager Public Involvement, Communications

Scott Denham, CFF gave a presentation on the regional parks system marketing and communications study done as outlined in the presentation provided.

Mullin shared discussion questions for the Commission and Fure reviewed them.

Moeller stated he heard the distinction between regional, county, and city parks but stated this is not something that park users think about. They are more focused on the park activities they seek.

Harris discussed what National Parks have been doing – highlighting lesser used parks.

Fure discussed National Park work being done with developing individual, unique park identities.

Chair Yarusso asked the Commission what should we do differently from what we are doing now? What action should we take?

Dillenburg stated that there is a lot more work to do to increase public awareness of the Regional Parks System. We have a long road ahead of us to make this change.

Moeller heard that regional parks trail branding didn't seem to gain much traction in the study because it would cost a lot and it would not be challenging to move the needle.

Fure discussed the individual branding efforts already done by the park implementing agencies.

Harris asked, if you're on a regional trail you may go through a city park – people may not understand that a city has both. She wondered if this even mattered, to have the public understand the differences.

Peichel likes the idea of demonstrating more integration of information for easy access and use. He feels it's not the Council's job to brand but to be a convener of providers.

Fure discussed the importance of tools to start connecting people to parks.

Chair Yarusso discussed existing tools and resources that provide filters/information by activity.

Fure noted this is the first step in marketing and communication analysis.

Atlas-Ingebretson stated we've done tons of work and that we need to start acting. She feels lack of awareness is the big barrier.

Mullin agreed and stated one thing unique about this Marketing and Communications Study is that the focus was on in-person interviews with Park Directors and Communications staff. He discussed bringing together this group discuss how we can work together.

Lovelee added that raising awareness is one of our biggest barriers. She discussed the difficulty getting everyone to the table to start taking action. We need to do this in collaboration with the agencies and stated the first step is convening all agencies.

Fure stated there are so many opportunities to bring our communication resources together. She asked if there are any additional questions.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked, what is the connection between equity and communication and marketing? She stated we need to ask – what is the expectation of this work? She feels that the park agencies have an opportunity to do something more around marketing and communication.

Chair Yarusso asked, what is staff looking for from this Commission and if there will be any official business to vote on.

Mullin stated we are looking for feedback on what we need to do to move forward.

Peichel asked, can we get parks listed on bus route maps? Chair Yarusso noted we've discussed this before. He stated he wished there were more buses near parks but highlighting the ones that do exist is a great idea. Fure agreed.

Dillenburg discussed social media and the use of videos. She also suggested working with Charter and private schools, particularly the ones that serve the communities we seek to better serve.

Fure discussed next steps, including convening the implementing agencies and communication folks.

Lovelee agreed and discussed pulling together the implementing agencies to launch this work and take action. She also discussed amplifying work already being done by agencies.

Atlas-Ingebretson discussed the challenges of communicating with people who are interested in getting outdoors but don't yet have the tradition. She discussed using social media/ apps that could help with this. How can we encourage people to connect and build relationships that will support more active lifestyles?

Peichel stated that in addition to schools, churches may be a good connection as well.

Moeller discussed the benefits of simplifying our messages and working on conveying a sense of safety and welcoming? He pointed to some of the work of Three Rivers Park District, who have invested a lot in this area and have developed a positive image. He stated it makes him think of quality, safety, etc. When he reads Metropolitan Council Regional Parks, it's a lot of big words. A simplified name/brand may be good.

Chair Yarusso asked the consultant, does branding help get people into our parks? He stated we need to identify – what does it mean to be a regional park in Minnesota? Is there something we could do to better convey this?

Lovelee responded that it's less about a brand or logo, but how we tell the story of our Regional Park system.

Chair Yarusso stated he envisions converting the word 'Regional' into a brand that could tell people what to expect in our system.

Harris asked about 'regional' as a descriptor when it could be anywhere in the state.

Fure discussed the use of words to create feelings and stated there are lots of ways to do this.

Mullin stated our network of trails in the metro region is getting bigger. He asked, how do we help make them understood as a system, that is welcoming and accessible?

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso thanked Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson for all her work with this Commission.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Mullin also thanked Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson for her service to the Council and this Commission. He also thanked everyone who participated in the workshop, "Stories I Didn't Know" and noted the discussion can be found on the Council's website.

Mullin stated he attended the River-to-River Regional Trail ribbon cutting for the opening of the Robert Street tunnel project in West Saint Paul, Dakota County.

Mullin noted that October 11, 2021, is Indigenous People's Day and discussed that there would be a celebration at the future site of the Wakan Tipi Visitors Center, Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary.

Council Liaison: Atlas-Ingebretson thanked all staff and commissioners as well as leadership and support from Lisa Barajas.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary