

# Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



**Meeting Date:** September 1, 2022

**Time:** 4:00 PM

**Location:** Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park

## Members Present:

Chair, Tony Yarusso, At-large

Monica Dillenburg, District A

Robert Moeller, District B

Cana Yang, District C

Assata Brown, District D

Jeremy Peichel, District E

Cecily Harris, District F

Anthony Taylor, District G

Todd Kemery, District H

Susan Vento, Council Liaison

= present

## Call to Order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order.

## Agenda Approved

Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. Agenda was approved by consensus.

## Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Peichel, seconded by Harris, to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2022 regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Peichel, seconded by Harris, to approve the minutes of the August 4, 2022 regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

## Public Invitation

None.

## Business

1. **2022-239:** Diamond Lake Regional Trail and Dakota Rail – Luce Line Connector Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District (Chee Yang and Colin Kelly)

Chee Yang, Planner, presented the staff report to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission on September 1, 2022. Kelly Grissman, Three Rivers Park District Director of Planning and Stephen Shurson, Three Rivers Park District Landscape Architect were also in attendance.

Commissioner Todd Kemery asked if the City of Medina is in support of the Diamond Lake Regional Trail and Dakota Rail – Luce Line Connector Master Plan. Yang confirmed that the city is in support of the trail plan. Shurson responded that the city raised concerns over eminent domain authority. Three Rivers Park District made clear that they would work on a willing seller basis and that resulted in the city's support for the plan.

Commissioner Kemery asked if the trail alignment will go through the City of Long Lake.

Shurson responded that the trail alignment will be located along the city boundary since the city did not support the trail plan.

Chair Yarusso asked how the trail will better serve underserved communities. Shurson responded that the trail planning process captured the advice learned from the engagement with underserved communities. The advice included helping ensure safety of trail users, local connections, and off-road nature experiences. Yarusso asked how Three Rivers sites trails to serve underserved populations? Grissman responded that trails are sited to provide high quality recreational experiences for Western Hennepin County. The trail planning takes into consideration equitable access as required by the Federal funding applications and is therefore a consideration with the Three Rivers siting process. Yarusso asked if Three Rivers counts non-local visits. Grissman responded that Three Rivers doesn't have a good way of capturing this data. Yarusso asked if Three Rivers asks trail visitors how far they travel on the trail. Grissman responded that Three Rivers does collect this data since the District asks trail visitors where they enter and leave the trail.

Commissioner Peichel asked if there will be a more direct alignment for the Long Lake segments (C3 and C4) in the future. Grissman responded that Three Rivers remains open to an alignment through Long Lake. Commissioner Moeller asked if the city's resistance to the trail is one of concern or part of a broader trend regarding trail development? Shurson responded that the trail already exists; however, the city fears that establishing it as part of the regional system would create congestion in downtown Long Lake. Grissman responded that families living in exurban areas with private land have less of a desire for trail connections than families in more urban areas with less land.

It was moved by Commissioner Todd Kemery, seconded by Commissioner Bob Moeller, that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Three Rivers Park District's Diamond Lake Regional Trail and Dakota Rail – Luce Line Connector Master Plan.
2. Require Three Rivers Park District, prior to initiating any construction of new or updating of existing paths, trails, bridges, or any other construction project, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.
3. Recommend that Three Rivers Park District coordinate with Steve Mahowald, 612-349-7775, at Metro Transit, regarding potential impacts to bus stop(s) along Wayzata Boulevard between Ferndale Road and Barry Avenue.

The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission voted unanimously to approve the proposed actions. **Motion carried.**

## Information

1. 2021 Visitor Study –Research Findings – Part 2 of 3. (Darcie Vandegrift)

Darcie Vandegrift, Principal Researcher, presented the 2021 Visitor Study –Research Findings – Part 2 of 3 to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission on September 1, 2022. The presentation was shared as part of the staff materials.

## Discussion

The commission had a robust discussion covering several key points:

- Funding shortages are a significant challenge for meeting public desire for high quality facilities. Efforts to communicate with the legislature about these concerns are critical in the coming legislative session. Commissioners discussed concerns about underfunding Operations and Maintenance, and how this can lead to more significant capital improvement issues.
- There is a desire to understand how regional park and trail use compares with the way visitors use state and local parks and trails.

- Discussion about how gender influences regional park and trail use:
  - Commissioners shared thoughts about why women visit regional parks more than regional trails.
  - There were questions about why men are a higher proportion of regional trails visitation. More research is needed to understand these dynamics.
  - There were questions about whether women travel alone or in groups within regional parks? More study is needed.
  - Adding trail amenities such as restrooms and family activities might encourage trail visitation for some women who are also parents.
- Support for strategies to promote the regional parks and trails.
  - The Council's recent communications and marketing study highlighted that there is significant interest among regional parks implementing agencies to promote the regional system and that they need help to do this work.
  - There are opportunities for joint communication efforts to build awareness of the regional system. Additionally, people felt communications efforts would attract more users, as lack of information is a significant barrier. These efforts could also focus on underserved communities.
  - Funding is a barrier for building awareness and promotion work. Commissioners expressed this concern as an important need.
  - Encouraged collaboration and partnership building with local groups who have relationships and connections with underrepresented members and groups.
- Commissioners encouraged agency staff to be aware of the different types of disabilities, including autism. The regional system should develop areas for families with autistic family members, designating quiet spaces for visitors to enjoy when feeling overstimulated. There was recognition that some agencies, including Three Rivers have implemented these quiet spaces for children with autism.

2. Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission: Roles of the Commission (Emmett Mullin and LisaBeth Barajas)

LisaBeth Barajas, Community Development Executive Director, and Emmett Mullin, Park Manager, provided an information item, discussing the role of the Commission. Because the Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park Visitor Center closes at 6:00 PM, Chair Yarusso encouraged staff to make the presentation but hold the discussion and questions until the October MPOSC meeting.

## Reports

3. Chair

None

4. Committee Members

None

5. Council Liaison

None

6. Staff

- Staff are preparing for the 2023 Legislative Session which will be a biennial budgeting year, with decisions about Parks and Trails Legacy Funding and Operations and Maintenance. There may be other funding bills too.
- The Parks team has launched social media accounts for the Regional Parks System, for



Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Contact Amanda Lovelee if you want more information.

### **Adjournment**

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.

### **Certification**

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting of September 1, 2022.

Approved this 6th day of October 2022.

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### **Council Contact:**

Sandi Dingle, Recording Secretary

[Sandi.Dingle@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:Sandi.Dingle@metc.state.mn.us)

651-602-1312

