

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: April 4, 2024

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

Chair, Tony Yarusso,
at large

Monica Dillenburg, District A

Robert Moeller, District B

Tess Bouska, District C

David Yakes, District D

Chris Suerig, District E

Cecily Harris, District F

Anthony Taylor, District G

Amanda Duerr, 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 at 4:00 pm.

Agenda approved

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

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Harris to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2024, regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

None.

Business

2024-89: Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award (Stu-Mac), Washington County (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on a request from Washington County for a grant from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund for Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park as outlined in the materials provided.

Commissioner Cecily Harris asked about the unique shape of the park at the north end. Sharon Price, Washington County Parks explained when the City of Cottage Grove built the City Hall and Hero Center, they needed a portion of park land to make the project viable. So the park boundary was adjusted, and later replaced on a one acre for one basis. Additionally, due to the topography of the ravine, it is an odd shape.

It was moved by Harris, seconded by Dillenburg, to recommend that Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$406,722 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Washington County to acquire approximately 11 acres located at 9826 East Point Douglas Road South in Cottage Grove, MN, for the Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park.

2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Motion carried.

2024-90: Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award (Barbarawi), Scott County (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on a request from Scott County for a grant to acquire property for Blakely Bluffs Park Reserve as outlined in the materials provided.

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Moeller, to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$680,486 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Scott County to acquire approximately 41 acres located at 24236 Union Trail in Belle Plain, MN, for the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve.
2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Yakes asked about the amount of time it takes for agencies to assemble lands needed to open a park or park reserve. Chair Yarusso explained that agencies work with willing sellers, so the process can take a long time.

Motion carried.

2024-91: Regional Parks and Trails System Competitive Equity Grant Program Funding Recommendations (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on the Regional Parks and Trails System Competitive Equity Grant Program (EGP) funding recommendations as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked about the possibility of a presentation about the outcomes of this program, once the equity projects have been completed. She suggested that this could be a joint presentation to MPOSC and the Council. Lee stated that was a great idea.

Harris asked, are these Equity Grant Program funds tied to just equity? Chair Yarusso discussed the EGP and stated there is no policy about the interest earnings in our Regional Parks Policy Plan (RPPP) at this time. He added that during the Policy Plan discussion, there may be an opportunity to address this.

Amanda Lovelee spoke about how equity and art go hand in hand and discussed some of the work they are doing with the Art + Policy project.

Dillenburg shared that she enjoyed reviewing these projects and asked Lee to discuss the small number of projects that were not fully funded. Lee explained that a few grants had small amounts of funds that were not eligible for capital funding because they were for projects outside of the regional parks system boundaries.

Moeller discussed the importance of greater awareness of our parks to new and existing people and how we can make that happen for even greater impact. Chair Yarusso stated that the Commission could direct this question to the Council for guidance through Council Member Vento.

There was discussion about multimedia efforts being done at the agency level and in collaboration with Council staff.

Moeller asked about the Met Council's use of advertising agencies for awareness consulting assistance. Lovelee stated our Communications Department usually leads our work on marketing and advertising. Moeller suggested having someone from that department come and speak to the Commission at a future meeting. Mullin stated he will reach out to Communications staff and invite them to a meeting later this year.



It was moved by Yakes, seconded by Moeller, to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve funding 22 projects totaling up to \$2,055,500 for the Regional Parks and Trails System 2024 Equity Grant Program, as shown in Table 1 of this report.
2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreements and associated amendments on behalf of the Council.

Motion carried.

Information

2050 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update, Draft Policies and Actions (Emmett Mullin and Kevin Phan)

Mullin and Phan presented the information item on the 2050 Regional Parks Policy Plan (RPPP) draft policies and actions as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked some clarifying questions including her desire for us to collect visitation data during the winter months, as discussed in the past, instead of using seasonal multipliers to project winter use.

Moeller suggested adding language to increase awareness in the Foster Equity and Belonging section of the draft plan.

Climate and natural systems were discussed including increasing our role in working with the implementing agencies to provide assistance and support. Mullin noted that the Council has hired two climate researchers, and this would be a future area of focus.

Moeller asked about the Climate and Natural System Policy areas and whether we are going to audit and measure this area to better understand progress. Mullin stated that this is one of the newest policies and we are still working on how to do this in a collaborative way. Moeller suggested that we play the role of convener.

Dillenburg asked for a definition of climate and natural systems. She also suggested that we increase the length of time to maintain and protect regional trail investments from 10 to 20 years.

Chair Yarusso commented on the role of the regional system within the larger outdoor recreation landscape in Minnesota. He suggests including a statement on this role in both the handbook and the RPPP.

The Commission discussed overall system funding investments and stated they would like to understand how different funding levels relate to various growth scenarios.

It was suggested that the 4-year plan update schedule be explained further in the draft. What items should be taken up at what time during the 10-year update regional development guide cycle.

The Commissioners discussed that the Council's role goes beyond more than just administer grants. They said to expand the language to include fiduciary responsibility and complying with other funding requirements.

Harris asked about the natural systems policy, and how the term "native" was being used in the broader concerns about climate change. Mullin noted that this is a great point and one that our climate researchers are exploring.

Yakes expressed his appreciation for using graphics and icons for illustrating the different parks objectives. He also suggested a possible sixth objective addressing how we partner with implementing agencies to achieve our goals.



Reports

Chair

Chair Yarusso noted that we will need to reschedule our July 4, 2024 meeting due to the holiday and suggested moving it to July 11th. All Commissioners agreed to this date change.

Committee Members

Harris reported on the Washington County Meeting of Glacial Hills Regional Trail's 3rd meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee. She also shared that the Board will be looking at E-bike use on trails.

Council Liaison

None.

Staff

Mullin gave a legislative update and discussed the next steps for the RPPP. He will send a summary email to Commissioners after the meeting.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:56 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 April 4, 2024.

Approved this 2nd day of May 2024.

Council contact:

Sandi Dingle, Recording Secretary
Sandi.Dingle@metc.state.mn.us
651-602-1312

