

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: August 1, 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, E = excused

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 approved.

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Taylor to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2024 special meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

None.

Business

1. **2024-192 JT:** 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan, Release for Public Comment (Colin Kelly, Jessica Lee, Jenessa Carlisle)

Mullin began a short presentation on the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan public comment draft, by covering sections 1 and 2. Kelly reviewed sections 3 through 6. Carlisle gave a presentation on section 7. And Mullin concluded with a review of sections 8 and 9, and then opened the conversation up to the Commission.

Harris made several comments and asked questions as follows: Page 19, line 28, she pointed out redundancy in the language. Page 21, Lines 12 and 13, she asked whether agencies are working on wildlife corridors. Kelly discussed a proposed subclassification that would include wildlife corridors. This idea was added to the workplan in Section 9 of the plan. Page 25, line 6, she asked what does ornamental quality mean. Staff noted they would review and make a clarification. Page 68, line 13 and 14, regarding green gentrification, Harris asked what that does this actually mean? Mullin responded he feels this is something to be discussed further and committed to adding clarifying language. Page 76, lines 18 and 19, regarding the word "considered", she asked to clarify because this language is vague. Page 96, number 9 in the workplan, she asked what 'Pay-Go' is. Mullin stated this idea has been included in our Legislative goals. It would allow funding of the regional system with general taxation revenue

in addition to regional bonds and it would still be constrained by the \$40 million funding limit. Harris responded that maybe this section could provide more specific language.

Taylor discussed the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources funding and collaboration with them for another funding source. He noted this funding is so flexible. Mullin noted that the continuation of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund will be on the ballot this fall.

Chair Yarusso asked Vento if we have anything in the draft plan that impacts Council funding being budgeted for parks. Vento stated this is a good question and she remarked that the Council budget is being developed now.

Chair Yarusso clarified that these costs could include, for example, funding for marketing, etc.

Mullin noted the budgeting process is done separate from policy updates but noted that one does inform the other. He will look into this further.

Vento discussed piggybacking on marketing done by the implementing agencies. Kelly noted actions listed in the policy plan related to these actions.

Taylor asked about future planning and development process, including in outlying areas. Vento responded that planning is done at the local levels in their comprehensive plans.

Chair Yarusso discussed the term 'high quality natural resources' and asked, is it defined in the document? Kelly stated it is not defined but stated it could be better described. Mullin discussed the evolution of thinking around what is considered 'high quality'.

Harris discussed regional trails across the different parts of our region and noted that they are vary so much from urban to rural and suburban areas. She discussed that the standards shouldn't be the same. Chair Yarusso stated this is something that could be discussed further. Kelly noted that this will be discussed in more detail in the workplan around the future regional trails work.

Dillenburg stated she likes the document and appreciates the work done. She asked how the public comment process works. Lisa Barajas, Community Development gave a quick summary of all the different ways to the public may comment and discussed ways the public is made aware of this opportunity to comment.

Yakes asked, is there an app for the Regional Parks System? Lovelee responded that there is not however, there is a social media account. Mullin commented on the Council and Agencies efforts to improve the regional parks and trails GIS database.

Duerr suggested reaching out to cities and offering a QR code in their newsletters and/or on their website.

Chair Yarusso referred to page 64, regarding land acquisition and asked will pursual of acquisitions be on a willing seller basis? He likes this idea but asked, is it our place to say 'will'? This sounds too strong and suggested verbiage like 'encourage'. He also noted page 65 regarding a stronger statement on acquisition process and questioned the verbiage. He then referred to page 90 and 93, regarding bonding, and asked, should policy reference the legislative trend to use 'cash' as part of state bonding agreements, as this has happened in the past year. Staff will review the language and offer suggestions.

Chair Yarusso discussed formalizing the Equity Grant Program and interest earnings. He didn't believe this is currently formalized in our parks and trails handbook.

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Duerr, to recommend that the Metropolitan Council release the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Plan for public review and comment.

Chair Yarusso asked about online comment platform and how a person references it. Barajas explained how the comments are cross-referenced.

Motion carried.



Reports

1. Chair

Chair Yarusso asked if there is a campaign for the ENRTF vote. Mullin stated that Conservation MN is working on leading this campaign with others in the conservation world.

2. Committee Members

None.

3. Council Liaison

None.

4. Staff

Mullin stated staff will share a schedule of events of the arts and policy work being done.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:40 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 August 1, 2024.

Approved this 5th day of September 2024.

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