

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: January 9, 2025

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

Without a quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:03pm.

Agenda approved

Because there was not a quorum present Chair Yarusso suggested starting with the Information Item rather than the Business Items. The Commission agreed to this change.

Approval of minutes

Because there was not a quorum present, Chair Yarusso recommended postponing the approval of the December 5, 2025 minutes.

Public invitation

No one wished to address the Commission.

Information

Parks and Trails Legacy Fund FY 2026-2027 Biennial Project Overview and Equity Highlights (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on the Parks and Regional Trails Legacy Fund FY 2026-2027 Biennial Project Overview and Equity Highlights and asked each of the implementing agencies to discuss their proposed projects.

A representative from each of the implementing agencies spoke of their projects as listed in the materials provided and also discussed equity highlights. It was noted that Three Rivers Park District has recently entered into a cooperative agreement with the City of Bloomington to take care of their regional system. As such, Bloomington projects have not yet been identified.

Lee provided Washington County Legacy projects and equity highlights because they were not able to attend today's meeting.

Business

2024-3 JT, Accept the Public Comment Report and Adopt the Imagine 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan Chapter (Colin Kelly, Tracey Kinney, Emmett Mullin, Kevin

Phan)

Staff gave a presentation on the acceptance of the Public Comment report to adopt the Imagine 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan Chapter as outlined in the materials provided. Mullin noted that while we do not have a quorum present Commissioner's Moeller and Dillenburg sent in their full endorsement and with that, while not official, he looks forward to a consensus from this Commission to move this item forward to the full Council.

Harris asked about trail attributes (page 29) and about a description of water trails. She noted the reference to canoeing and thought that a broader description of paddle sports, e.g., including uses like kayaking and paddle boarding, would be better.

Next, Harris asked about the Cost to Complete the System (page 59), wondering if the Regional Parks and Trails System will ever be complete? Mullin noted Legislation calls for this calculation based on current identified needs but agreed that the system will never be complete.

Harris referred to page 86 and commented that she is frightened of electric bikes and if this will be discussed further. Kelly noted the workplan does call out investigating e-bike use on regional trails.

Chair Yarusso pointed out that while the cost to build out the system is a requirement of the policy plan, the language in state statute is slightly different so don't use the word, "completion".

Harris referred to page 98 and discussed the term stakeholder, expressing concern that it may be offensive to some and recommended 'decision maker' instead.

Chair Yarusso stated that after spending two years working on this plan, he still feels that there is work to be done. The nature of the system is changing, and he acknowledged that our work together would continue.

Chair Yarusso suggested taking a motion to officially approve the plan at our next MPOSC meeting. He suggested forwarding the recommended action to the Community Development Committee by consensus but would still like a formal vote before bringing this to the Council.

The Commission agreed, by consensus, to Accept the public comment report on the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan. And, to adopt the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan Chapter.

2024-6, Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook (Tracey Kinney, Colin Kelly, and Kevin Phan)

Staff gave a presentation on the Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook for approval.

Harris discussed questions she had on the handbook, referring to page 15, line 31-32. Additionally, she asked whether there is a required threshold for regional trails to be classified as "regional", do they need to be used by non-local visitors at least 40% of the time? Chair Yarusso stated that we don't have a way to address this topic easily. Staff said that it is an estimate they would continue to measure and keep an eye on.

Chair Yarusso asked about a more up-to-date parks map. Mullin stated staff are working on the GIS improvement project, which will yield an updated electronic map. Chair Yarusso suggested updating the map on the website as soon as possible.

Chair Yarusso reviewed the recommendation that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Establish the Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook as the administrative guide for regional parks and trails long-range planning requirements.
2. Adopt the attached Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.
3. Authorize Council staff to make administrative changes to the Handbook over time, including additions and updates to related tools and resources.

4. Direct Council staff to bring any updates that directly impact or necessitate implementing agency action related to Sections 3, 5, 6, and 7 of the Planning Handbook to the Council for approval, aligning with any updates to the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan.

Without a quorum being present, Chair Yarusso asked for the recommendation to be moved forward by consensus but also noted that he would like to take formal action on this recommendation at the February 6, 2025 MPOSC meeting. Commission members agreed to move the recommendation forward.

Reports

Chair

Chair Yarusso asked about an appointment of a Vice-Chair and asked if this could be done at our next meeting. He also suggested a bylaw amendment because this process to require the Vice-Chair appointment at the January meeting has been difficult because the MPOSC appointments usually do not occur until later than January.

Committee Members

Harris noted that Washington County is starting on the Battle Creek - St. Croix River Regional Trail planning process, and she will serve on the Technical Advisory Committee.

Council Liaison

None.

Staff

Mullin stated the Legislature starts on Monday and noted the budget is yet to be determined.

Mullin stated they are planning to conduct interviews for MPOSC Districts E, F, G, and H later this month.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 6:25 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 January 9, 2025.

Approved this 6th day of February 2025.

Council contact:

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