

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: June 5, 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
- ☒ Wendy Wulff, Council Liaison
- ☐ = present

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Metropolitan Council acknowledges that the land we currently call Minnesota and specifically the seven-county region is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota Oyate who are present and active contributors to our thriving region. As part of the Metropolitan Council's commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism and the fact that government institutions, including the Metropolitan Council, benefitted economically, politically, and institutionally after the forceable removal of the Dakota Oyate, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to instilling Land, Water, and People Commitments in regional policy. These commitments support the Dakota Oyate, the eleven federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota, Ho-Chunk Nation, and the American Indian Communities representing over 150 diverse Tribal Nations that call the seven-county region home.

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 4:13 pm.

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment was called attention to by Chair Yarusso.

Agenda approved

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

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Dillenburg and seconded by Bouska to approve the minutes of April 3, 2025, regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

No one wished to speak.

Business

1. **2025-125:** Grand Rounds Missing Link Regional Trail, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award (Wall), Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (Jessica Lee, 651-602-1621)

Lee gave a presentation on the Grand Rounds Missing Link Regional Trail Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award requested by Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as outlined in

the materials provided.

Council Member Wendy Wulff asked whether the rules for Environmental Natural Resource Trust Fund changed? She thought they were to be used for high quality natural areas only. Lee stated that our recent funding request identified the priorities of lands with restoration potential. Additionally, Lee said we have worked closely with LCCMR to ensure this acquisition happened with transparency and support.

Harris asked about the restoration work to be done on the land acquired. Adam Arvidson, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, discussed that part of the vision for Grand Rounds is to create green corridors. This area has a history of heavy industrial use. Prior to acquiring the land, it will be cleaned up and things like broken concrete will be restored prior to the Park Board's work to create a more naturalized landscape. The vision for this area is to create both a recreational corridor and a habitat corridor.

Wulff asked for clarification on whether this property would be acquired in easement or fee title? Arvidson explained that the Park Board has an agreement with the developer that is multifaceted and includes easements and an acquisition.

Harris asked if there would be a pedestrian trail as well as a bike trail. Arvidson explained there would be a paved separated trail for each.

Bouska asked about the railroad near the trail and how that works with habitat crossings. Arvidson discussed the challenges with the rail yard. He said that planning for this area has been challenging and noted the railyard poses a significant barrier.

Wulff asked if we are setting a precedence for the way the money is being spent, using both Legacy and Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund. Yarusso clarified that this approach has occurred in past acquisitions, particularly with lands with structures. Chair Yarusso stated that the long-range plan discussed the importance of this corridor. Arvidson added that one part of the vision for this trail was to create a park-like corridor. He cited other areas within the Grand Rounds corridor where this has been done.

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Yakes, that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$2,910,158 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to acquire the West Park and East Park parcels totaling 1.4 acres located at 525 Malcolm Avenue South in Minneapolis, MN, for the Grand Rounds Missing Link Regional Trail.
2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Motion carried.

Information

1. Modernizing Regional Parks and Trails Mapping Information Item (Tracey Kinney, 651-602-1029 and Kevin Phan, 651-602-1333)

Kinney and Mullin gave a presentation on modernizing Regional Parks and Trails mapping as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked if all seven counties are using GIS for their land records system. She noted for some of the smaller cities and townships in Washington County that they do not have the capacity to use GIS systems, and their maps may be inconsistent with this information. Once this proposal is approved, she asked, will agencies have to use this data as the record? Kinney explained that this proposal seeks to align long-range plans with the GIS data. The precision of the GIS data is far greater than the maps in the plans. Mullin noted that the implementing agencies are ultimately the owners of the GIS data and are responsible for aligning the long-range plans with the data. This product will help us to get to a better place, but the system is not perfect.

Chair Yarusso discussed the terminology that Council staff was using, particularly the “document of record”. He recommends using the Council’s reference document. He also suggested being clear about what this information will be used for, e.g., for calculating park acreage totals and funding allocation.

Chair Yarusso asked whether this proposal needed to move forward through a Policy Plan Amendment, or would it be possible to move this item as a simple business item? Mullin stated that he would check in with General Counsel and get back to the group next meeting.

Chair Yarusso suggested it might be important to create two categories of mapping changes: first for lands that have State or Council funding included and another for lands that were acquired by other means.

Chair Yarusso asked staff to help clarify how this proposal will authorize and track the land record change. Staff said they would be bringing this proposal to the Community Development Committee and then report back with next steps.

Reports

1. Chair

Notes our next meeting will be Tuesday, July 1, 2025 (due to the upcoming July 4th holiday).

2. Committee Members

None.

3. Council Liaison

None.

4. Staff

Mullin gave a brief legislative update and noted that the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund bill for Fiscal Years 2026-27 passed during the regular session. Also, he noted that the Environment Bill had not passed yet, but the committee appeared to have reached an agreement, which is good because this bill appropriates the Regional Parks and Trails System Operations and Maintenance Funding. He also stated there is no bonding bill yet.

Next, Mullin discussed a future meeting with the implementing agencies that includes a tour of the Kenilworth Tunnel and Midtown Greenway / Greenline Extension project. If Commissioners have any questions about the tour, they should contact Mullin.

Finally, Mullin discussed the upcoming September MOPSC meeting and tour idea to meet at Baylor Regional Park in Carver County. He noted that the date may change if we are able to plan a coordinated meeting with the Carver County Parks and Open Space Commission – stay tuned.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:57 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 June 5, 2025.

Approved this 1st day of July 2025.

Council contact:

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