

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: April 3, 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 4:03pm.

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment was read 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, seconded by Harris to approve the minutes of the March 6, 2025, regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Introduction

Emmett Mullin introduced Wendy Wulff, Met Council liaison who is taking over for retired Council Member Sue Vento.

Public invitation

None.

Business

1. **2025-87:** Baker Park Reserve Long-Range Plan, Three Rivers Park District (Colin Kelly and Kevin Phan)

Kelly and Phan gave a presentation on the Baker Park Reserve Long Range Plan developed by Three Rivers Park District (3RPD), as outlined in the materials provided.

Commissioner Cecily Harris asked about our work as it relates to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Lisa Barajas explained our planning processes are locally funded and focused, not federally.

Commissioner Anthony Taylor stated that this is one of 3RPD's destination parks. What is the district doing about the gap between Baker and Gale Woods Special Recreation Feature? Stephen Shurson, 3RPD staff, explained that there is a proposed trail connection that will eventually connect to these two parks and many others, including Carver Park Reserve. He also shared about search corridors on the north end of the park reserve.

Commissioner Monica Dillenburg suggested solar energy be called 'clean energy'. Mullin shared that the Council has staff dedicated to encouraging the use of solar energy. Wulff discussed a state law that requires allowance for solar.

Harris asked about programming in winter, particularly on the golf course that is part of the Park Reserve but is not a regional activity. She was particularly interested in sledding, cross-country skiing, and were these activities eligible for regional funding. Chair Yarusso explained the nuances of eligibility.

Chair Yarusso asked about engagement during the planning process. Jonathan Vlaming, 3RPD staff, shared about their efforts to develop stronger relationships with historically underrepresented groups. He shared about Three Rivers opportunities at Baker and their desire to help teach outdoor skills, e.g., camping. This work will help shape plans about how facilities will be developed in the future.

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

1. Approve the Baker Park Reserve Long-Range Plan.
2. Advise Three Rivers Park District to consider implementing the recommendations for solar resources and population forecasts in the Advisory Comments section of the business item.
3. Require the Park District, prior to any new development of the park reserve, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

Chair Yarusso asked Three Rivers staff about natural systems planning, including how do you plant "native" species verses planning for climate change. Vlaming discussed that Three Rivers has staff that are working to balance of historical restoration with planting for resilience and climate change.

Motion carried.

Information

1. Grounded and Growing, A living history of our region's parks and trails (Jessica Lee, Krysten Ryba-Tures, and Raven McKnight)

Lee, Ryba-Tures, and McKnight gave a presentation on the Grounded and Growing, A Living History of Our Region's Parks and Trails project as outlined in the materials provided.

Brigitte Bjorklund, Zan Associates discussed the engagement process outlined in the presentation provided.

It was noted that the website went live yesterday on the Council's website:



www.metrocouncil.org/parkslivinghistory

Chair Yarusso asked how do we publicize this project going forward? Lee discussed the Parks Ambassador program and current and future engagement, where this project can be integrated into the dialogue.

Wulff suggested engaging Communications staff, to help push it out through social media.

Commissioner David Yakes suggested not referring to this as a tool but maybe more of a community resource. This website is beyond just research.

The Commission discussed ideas of how to promote this project to the region, such as linking it to Park Agency websites.

Taylor commended the team for working hard not to make this project an “extractive” exercise with the prioritized communities. He encouraged the team to continue to work on root causes of disparities. He appreciated that this is not a “finished” project.

Reports

1. Chair
None.
2. Committee Members
None.
3. Council Liaison
None.
4. Staff

Mullin stated that the Legislative session is progressing rapidly. He also asked about summer park tours and if there were any places the Commission would like to see, to let him know. Wulff suggested visiting a park that is working on a long-range plan. Duerr discussed tunnels for animal crossings at Lebanon Hills and felt those would be interesting. Harris shared that she would like to explore parks in the less developed parts of our region. Mullin shared that he'll look at past visit information and will come back to the Commission with a proposal.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:51 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 3, 2025.

Approved this 1st day of May 2025.

Council contact:

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

