

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: February 6, 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

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4pm.

Agenda approved

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

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Yakes and seconded by Dillenburg to approve the minutes of December 5, 2024, regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Yakes and seconded by Suerig to approve the minutes of January 9, 2025, special meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

None.

Business

1. **2024-47:** Big Marine Park Reserve, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award (Booren) Washington County (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on the Big Marine Park Reserve, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award request from Washington County as outlined in the materials provided.

Yakes asked about Veteran's Park and if it will continue. Chair Yarusso stated it is still active.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$1,300,682 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Washington County to acquire an 80-acre parcel located in the southeast quadrant of 180th Street and Manning Trail in Marine-on-St. Croix, MN, for the Big Marine Park Reserve.
2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Motion approved.

2. **2024-48:** Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award (Lehnert) Scott County (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award request from Scott County, as outlined in the materials provided.

Taylor asked how this acquisition fits into the partnership with Three Rivers Park District. Alys Olson, Scott County stated this acquisition involves only Scott County and is not part of their partnership management agreement with Three Rivers.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$807,025 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Scott County to acquire an 85-acre parcel located at 17130 Salisbury Hill Road in Belle Plaine, 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.

Motion carried.

Information

1. Imagine 2050 Art + Policy Update (Ellie Hohulin and Erika Herrmann)

Hohulin and Herrmann gave a presentation on Imagine 2050 Art + Policy Update as outlined in the materials provided. They reviewed the questions for discussion.

Dillenburg liked using art, which is both “friendly” and a great way to engage people in policy discussions.

The Commission discussed the use of cards in the ‘Go Policy’ game modeled after ‘Go Fish’ at the Art Shanty Project event on Lake Harriet and talked about other ways to utilize cards to show what activities are available at different parks.

Bouska discussed mosaics and suggested using this medium in other ways within the parks system.

Taylor discussed the importance of engaging people in parks, particularly non-traditional communities. While engaging people in a park, we’re already talking to people who love parks. How do we get into dialogue with new visitors? He suggested engagement outside of parks to get more people into our parks.

Chair Yarusso asked how we know when we are accomplishing our goals? How might we measure this. Hohulin discussed an impact study that the parks team is working on and noted that the Art + Policy effort is a pilot project but they’re learning a lot that will help inform the next steps.

Chair Yarusso suggested asking agencies to solicit photos and art pieces from the artists, to use in their long-range plans.

Taylor discussed information graphics and stated that when they are well done, they really work.

Chair Yarusso discussed water trails and asked whether we call these out in the Regional Parks maps or our website. He discussed the state (DNR) water trail system. Could we do this for our regional parks.

2. Regional Parks and Trails System 2024 Fishing Piers Grant Program Selection (Jessica Lee)

Lee reviewed the Regional Parks and Trails System 2024 Fishing Piers Program Selection.

Chair Yarusso spun the random selection wheel to select recipients for four \$125,000 awards. Awards will go to Ramsey County, Washington County, Carver County, and St. Paul.



Reports

1. Chair

Chair Yarusso discussed the two business items – the Imagine 2050 Parks and Trails Policy Plan and the Parks and Trails Planning Handbook that were presented at the January MPOSC meeting and that were forwarded as a consensus by the Commissioners present due to a lack of quorum. Considering the significance of this work, he asked Commissioners to now take formal action on the two items prior to it going before the full Council this month.

The first business item was **2025-3 JT**, Accept the Public Comment Report and Adopt the Imagine 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan Chapter

Chair Yarusso made the motion, and it was seconded by Yates to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Accept the public comment report on the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan.
2. Adopt the 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan Chapter.

Motion carried.

The second business item was **2025-6**, Adopt the Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook

Chair Yarusso made the motion, and it was seconded by Suerig to recommend 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.

Motion carried.

Chair Yarusso discussed moving the Thursday, July 3, 2025 meeting to Tuesday, July 1, 2025 due to the July 4, 2025 holiday falling on a Friday. All members present were in favor of moving the meeting to July 1, 2025. The recording secretary will poll members not present to ensure there will be a quorum.

2. Committee Members

None.

3. Council Liaison

None.

4. Staff

Mullin noted that interviews for open districts were held on January 23, 2025 for the four open districts. Results will be brought to the February 26, 2025 Council Meeting for formal appointment.

Mullin noted that the Legislature is now meeting and gave a brief update.

Mullin reminded Commission members that the Art Shanty is happening this Saturday and Sunday on Lake Harriet from 10a-4p and encouraged commission members to attend.

Adjournment



Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:24 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 February 2, 2025.

Approved this 6th day of March 2025.

Council contact:

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

