

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, July 7, 2015

Committee Members Present:

William Weber, Todd Kemery, Rick Theisen, Robert Moeller, Dean Johnston, Rachel Gillespie

Committee Members Absent: Sarah Hietpas, Anthony Taylor, Michael Kopp, Wendy Wulff, Council Liaison

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Johnston called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:03 p.m. on Tuesday, July 7, 2015.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Johnston noted that the first Business Item is being removed from the agenda as was the 4th (previously) and then noted that staff would like to add a business item (item 3) to address the work plan and scheduling for August. Chair Johnson asked for motion to approve the agenda, as amended, of the July 7, 2015 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Weber motioned and it was seconded by Theisen. **The amended agenda was approved.**

Chair Johnston asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2015 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Moeller motioned and it was seconded by Kemery. **Minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

Invitation to interested person(s) to address the Commission on matters not on the agenda.

Laura Hedland, an Eagan resident wished to address the Commission. She discussed discouraging the use of Round-Up in our parks and her concerns for the potential health hazard resulting from its use. She asked what it means to be a 'park preserve' and her concern over Spring Lake Park and the clearing being done for trails. She asked if we are counting animal visits and not just human visits. She discussed the importance of 'our legacy' and what we leave for future generations. She provided a handout outlining her concerns.

Holly Jenkins spoke to the Lebanon Hills Master Plan business item being pulled from this agenda and her concern that the discussion would be held at a future meeting off-site. She requested reconsideration of the meeting location. Chair Johnston noted that this will be discussed under item 3 of our amended agenda.

BUSINESS

Coon Creek Regional Trail Master Plan, Anoka County – Michael Peterka, Intern and Jan Youngquist, Manager

Peterka gave a presentation on the proposed master plan for Coon Creek Regional Trail submitted by Anoka County as outlined in the staff report provided.

Weber commented on trails and how we're seeing more and more connecting trails. He hopes in the future we see more 'greenway trails' as opposed to sidewalk trails. He noted the benefit of this trail as a connecting trail. Youngquist stated that staff toured the trail and it is very beautiful. She stated that about 90% of the trail has 'greenway'

characteristics. Anoka County is working to complete small segments, which can be difficult. Weber shared his concern with financing these types of trails and asked if it rises to the level of a 'regional trail'. Youngquist discussed how 'linking trails' are distinguished in the Regional Parks Policy Plan.

Theisen asked for an example where this happens. Youngquist noted the Mississippi River Regional Trail.

Theisen commented on concern for increased criminal activity in the area and asked if this is an issue. Karen Blaska, Anoka County stated that the feedback they received is that people think there will be criminal activity. The reality is that there is not and trails are an amenity. She stated that it is a perceived concern.

Moeller asked about policy language that encourages plantings, etc. that would provide, over time, a more greenway like trail rather than just a linking trail. Blaska stated that depending on where the trail is located they do try to restore native landscaping whenever possible.

Weber stated he would like to see more distinguishing language. Youngquist gave policy language that speaks to Weber's concerns where we encourage agencies to place trails in/near greenways whenever possible.

Weber also discussed trail width and stated he feels this looks like a local trail connecting two regional parks. He feels we should fund regional trails and let the locals fund local trails.

Theisen spoke to the difficulty in doing this when land has not been set aside previously. He appreciates Weber's comments however the bottom line is we need links. Moeller agreed that links are very important.

Youngquist gave perspective on why linking trails were added to the system. They provide connections in the inner-ring suburbs to pristine trails where people wouldn't have to use a car to get to a trail.

Catherine Zimmer, St. Paul resident commented on the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan and the goal of stewardship and protecting natural areas. She noted we keep fragmenting habitat when we keep developing trails, etc. Trails can be a death trap for small animals, turtles, snakes, frogs, etc.

Moeller asked for proposals, i.e., culvert, underpass, etc. Zimmerman noted that they are trying this with highways and putting in underpasses, etc. She was not sure however if we could funnel small creatures but reiterated that we need to be very careful where we put trails.

Hedland stated there may be an opportunity to be creative and noted it doesn't have to be an either/or.

It was motioned by Moeller seconded by Theisen to recommend that the Metropolitan Council approve the Coon Creek Regional Trail Master Plan.

Chair Johnston called for a vote. **The motion** passed with Weber voting no.

Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board – Jan Youngquist, Manager

Youngquist gave a presentation on the master plan submitted by Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRD) for Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park as outlined in the staff report provided.

Kemery asked about accessibility in playgrounds. Adam Arvidson, MPRB stated they have already implemented some of this. They've upgraded some existing equipment and added some changes, paths, etc. making playgrounds and beaches more accessible.

Weber noted that this facility is bombarded with airport noise. He also spoke to the Natural Resources Framework Plan included in the master plan which he felt was good.

Moeller felt the master plan was well done and was pleased to see naturalization incorporated into the plan supporting pollinators.

Theisen commented on and appreciated the comparison of campus style vs. natural style done in the report. Arvidson noted that they are seeing more requests for more natural landscapes/areas in their parks – including local parks. He stated this is an increasing recreational style that also has environmental benefits.

It was motioned by Weber seconded by Kemery to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Master Plan.
2. Require that prior to initiating development within the regional park, preliminary plans must be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the regional interceptor system.
3. Inform the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board that costs associated with the development of a skate park and modifications or improvements to the Nokomis Community Center and the athletic fields are not eligible for regional parks funding.
4. Encourage the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to incorporate the necessary staff changes and training to properly manage and support natural landscapes as soon as feasible, so that naturalization/restoration projects described in the master plan can begin to be carried out when funding becomes available.

Chair Johnston called for a vote. **The motion carried unanimously.**

MPOSC Work Plan and August Meeting Schedule - Jan Youngquist, Manager

Youngquist stated that there is a tour scheduled for the August 4 meeting (in Carver County). The proposed tour would begin at 3pm in Chaska and a Business Meeting beginning at 4:30pm. She discussed the Lebanon Hills topic being a long topic and noted that staff suggests having a 2nd meeting in August – approximately two weeks later to accommodate this topic.

The Committee discussed alternatives including moving the tour or canceling it. Moeller stated he is in favor of rescheduling the tour. Youngquist stated she could talk to Carver County about this possibility.

It was noted that without a second meeting in August, the August 4 meeting could be a long meeting.

Theisen motioned to hold the August 4th meeting at the Metropolitan Council and possibly reschedule the tour to Chaska. Kemery seconded the motion.

Chair Johnston called for a vote. **The motion carried unanimously.**

INFORMATION

None.

REPORTS

Chair: None

Staff: Youngquist gave an update on the hiring of a new Regional Parks and Natural Resources Department Manager. She noted that the first-round of interviews have been done and they are moving on to second interviews. She also noted that applications for the Finance position have been received.

Commissioners: Moeller noted that the Minnesota River Bluff LRT Regional Trail (portion that was washed out) has still not been repaired. Kelly Grissman, Three Rivers Park District gave a brief update. She noted that Three Rivers does not own the land and stated they are working with FEMA and the county and it looks like there may be some FEMA money available. Moeller asked if an alternative

interim route could be established. Griswold stated she will check into this and forward information on to staff however does not believe it is possible.

ADJOURNMENT

5:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary