

## Minutes of the

### MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, June 7, 2016

#### Committee Members Present:

Dean Johnston, Todd Kemery, Sarah Hietpas, Robert Moeller, Rick Theisen, Bill Weber, Anthony Taylor, Rachel Gillespie, Michael Kopp and Wendy Wulff, Council Liaison

**Committee Members Absent:** None.

#### CALL TO ORDER

Chair Johnston called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:02 p.m. on Tuesday, June 7, 2016.

#### APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Johnston requested an amendment to the June 7, 2016 agenda to include approval of the March 1, 2016 minutes as there was not a quorum at the May meeting to approve them. Weber motioned and it was seconded by Kemery to approve the amended June 7, 2016 agenda. **Motion carried.**

Chair Johnston asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2016 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Gillespie motioned and it was seconded by Taylor to approve the minutes. **Minutes were approved.**

Chair Johnston asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2016 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Kemery motioned and it was seconded by Johnston to approve the minutes. **Minutes were approved.**

#### PUBLIC INVITATION

Chair Johnston asked if there was anyone in the audience that would like to speak on matters not on the agenda. No one came forward.

#### BUSINESS

**(2016-110) Grant Agreement Amendment for Coon Rapids Dam RP, Anoka County** - Victoria Dupre, Senior Planner

Dupre gave a presentation on the request from Anoka County to amend the project scope of Parks Grant SG2012-034 as outlined in the materials provided. She added information not contained in the staff report regarding the master plan outlining the proposal of four fishing piers within this park. She also noted that this was a project listed in the CIP.

Gillespie clarified that the master plan from 1985 did include fishing piers. Dupre confirmed.

Gillespie questioned the age of the master plan and asked if this is a good use of funds. Dupre stated that the implementing agencies do their best to use funds allocated to them to support high priority projects. She noted that State Statute does not require 'when' a master plan should be updated.

Hietpas asked if there are guidelines to updating or rewriting a master plan. Dupre stated that the statute does not specifically give any. It is up to the implementing agencies to evaluate.

Kemery asked for further clarification. Wulff stated that she sees the ability to amend a grant like this as a reward for good fiscal stewardship on the part of the

park agency. She stated if they can get a project done under budget, we don't take the money away, we let them spend it on another project.

Catherine Zimmer, Executive Director Women Observing Wildlife MN, researched this agenda item and her findings are contrary to the staff report. She reviewed her findings and noted this lake was not even in existence at the time this master plan was written (1985). She quoted state statute and noted that it does state that master plans shall be updated "from time to time" and stated while that is not specific, this master plan has not been updated in 31 years. She feels this master plan is inconsistent with both state statute and the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* and suggested that this request not be approved.

Kopp noted that the original master plan calls for four piers and asked if there was no lake what were they for? Dupre stated that the master plan outlined the excavation and development of this lake.

Hietpas asked if there have been any amendments to this master plan. Dupre stated there have not been. She added at the time the Metropolitan Council adopted the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, which contained a more robust master planning component list, the Council did not require the park agencies to go back and update all previously adopted master plans. The intent is that going forward any new master plans must meet the requirements listed in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. She noted that it is very expensive for the park agencies to update their plans.

Zimmer asked if the master plan met the criteria for the Parks Policy Plan at the time that the grant was originally issued (2012). Wulff stated that the policy plan has been updated many times over the years but we do not require updates to master plans just to get a grant because master plans are meant to be long-term. It would be very expensive to update master plans for every grant request or amendment to a grant – probably costing more than the actual grant amount that they are seeking.

It was motioned by Theisen, seconded by Kopp to recommend that the Metropolitan Council approve an amendment to grant agreement SG2012-034 to expand the project scope to add "construction of a fishing pier at Cenaiko Lake at Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park."

Chair Johnston called for a vote. **Motion was approved** with Moeller abstaining as he was not present for the entire discussion.

### **(2016-111) Regional Parks System Equity Toolkit Recommendations** - Raintry Salk, Research Analyst and Lisa Tabor, CultureBrokers

Salk introduced Lisa Tabor, a consultant from CultureBrokers and gave some background of why the equity toolkit is being brought forward.

Tabor, a diversity, equity and inclusion consultant, gave a presentation and discussed the development process of the equity toolkit and the performance gaps among meeting the needs of persons of color. She reviewed the mix of stakeholders and the engagement process involved in shaping this toolkit. She described a simplified funding process and where the toolkit will be used in this process. She discussed the goal of the toolkit and the engagement done during the development of it. Tabor discussed key learnings and considerations to keep in mind and reviewed the summary of recommendations to the Metropolitan Council.

Tabor reviewed the grant application process and questions that have been added to look at equity.

Gillespie asked how the applicants will decide what populations will be better served. Tabor stated it would be done through their engagement and research – however the implementing agencies decide to do a project. Gillespie felt that this seemed assumptive.

Wulff noted that we do not provide money for operations. We provide money for capital projects. She stated that it's difficult to say what makes an equitable capital project. Salk stated that the sample responses are from actual projects.

Tabor continued her presentation which outlined impacts on communities, implementing agencies and the Metropolitan Council.

Salk reviewed the five questions that would comprise the equity toolkit and discussed the recommendation.

Weber liked the presentation and discussed that his prior concerns were about projects not being funded or that it's a 'heavy-handed' approach. His concern is that not all projects can be measured with equity. He asked if this process could be used for master plans. Salk noted that staff will not be ranking lists but will make suggestions to the Council to re-rank if they so choose. She also noted that some projects may state that they 'will not advance equity'.

Wulff stated that there are a multitude of issues that are being worked on. Equity is not the 'end all'.

Salk discussed master plan development and noted that the Council is asking for more robust community engagement.

Moeller stated that he liked this and discussed things in general that may improve broader usage of regional parks and trails by minorities. He shared concerns with the increased administrative time needed to get through the process. He also stated that he feels it is important that this is a collaborative process with the implementing agencies.

Taylor feels that what we're trying to do is institutionalize equity. He would like to hear from the implementing agencies. He feels this is a 'softer' approach than he thought it would be and also feels the Met Council's statement regarding equity is much stronger. He feels we need to take the toolkit to a broader discussion keeping persons of color in the Twin Cities using our greatest asset – our parks.

Kemery asked when it will start and how. Salk discussed the next steps. She noted if this recommendation moves forward to the Community Development Committee and then the Council it would be used first with the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund. She is not sure yet how it would roll out.

Tabor discussed having a workshop (user session – at least one) with the Met Council, implementing agencies and the MPOSC.

Johnston asked for public comments.

Vaughn Larry, Board Member Alliance for Metropolitan Stability discussed other tools that are out there. He feels there should be others from the 'outside' compiling the report.

Jon Oyanagi, Ramsey County Parks participated in sessions and felt it was a very different process. He noted that Ramsey County's goal is to eliminate racial disparities. He stated they are also developing a toolkit. He noted that they are in support of this but one concern is the relatively abbreviated amount of time spent on its development. He feels future evaluation will be important. He was also concerned that it is more quantitative and less qualitative. He discussed amenities that may need to be looked at to be included in our parks in order to attract more people of color. He feels implementing agencies need to work together as some areas of the region may better serve some populations than others.

Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District was fully supportive. He wanted to address the misconception that agencies have not been doing anything. He noted they have and want to continue to help. He discussed housing, transportation, equity plans that are other parts of the puzzle and would love to discuss what they are doing to address equity.

Wulff commented that in some respects the Council is behind in what the agencies are doing.

Moeller stated that he would like a workshop to talk about what we have learned over the past few years and also to hear from the implementing agencies to strengthen our strategies.

Taylor felt it would be interesting to hear from agencies and what their focus has been. He feels that there are great opportunities and there needs to be active, ongoing community engagement.

Steve Sullivan, Dakota County Parks applauded the Metropolitan Council's efforts. He feels it's the right business decision to strengthen usage within the parks. He discussed some of the work that Dakota County is currently doing to become more informed of what the public wants. He discussed CIP prioritization and stated a question of why a project rose to the top should be addressed as it may not be equity but listed an array of reasons why lists are prioritized the way they are.

Wulff felt it is important to know broader reasons for prioritization.

Tabor pointed out questions on the application that do address other aspects and noted that the equity toolkit are additional questions.

Taylor felt it would be informative for the Commission to see the application. He felt that this is a monumental moment in time as equity and disparities are being addressed.

It was motioned by Hietpas, seconded by Taylor to recommend that the Metropolitan Council accept the Regional parks System Equity Toolkit recommendations and direct staff to begin use of the toolkit in the Capital Improvement Program and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund grant program in the manner specified in the *2040 Regional parks Policy Plan*.

Moeller felt that it is important for the Commission to understand the reasons why projects are prioritized the way that they are.

Wulff discussed the importance of this Commission's role.

Weber agreed with Moeller's comment.

Chair Johnston called for a vote. **The motion passed.**

## **INFORMATION**

**Recommendations for Future Regional Parks System Park Ambassador Program** - Raintry Salk, Research Analyst and Lisa Tabor, CultureBrokers

Salk discussed the Regional Parks System Ambassador Program.

Tabor discussed the program goals, program development, and reviewed the program recommendations.

Johnston asked what the next steps were. Salk stated that a position will be posted.

Wulff discussed her concern with targeting groups.

Tabor stated the strategy could be to get volunteers to mirror themselves. Identifying target populations would be strategic – where's the biggest gaps. She discussed the concern with diffusing efforts when trying to achieve too many goals at once. Her experience has been to focus on one for immediate success to energize the movement.

Salk discussed what she heard from the workshops – the need for development of authentic relationships.

**Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Role and Public Engagement Expectations** - Emmett Mullin, Manager Regional Parks and Natural Resources

Mullin gave a presentation regarding the role of the Commission and expectation of public engagement.

Hietpas stated that master plans are vague and she feels there's a gap in public engagement when a project is actually brought forward. She discussed reviews Commissioners are expected to do without the master plan. She feels there is not enough information to determine if policies have been followed and stated more information is needed in order to make an educated decision.

Mullin suggested that there are ways Council staff could provide more information, including making them available online.

Hietpas also commented that master plans should be looked at more frequently. She then discussed her concern with seeing ‘no known opposition’ in a staff report only to find out there is opposition, as they come to the meeting to comment in person what they’ve already submitted in writing.

Weber stated that public participation is the responsibility of the implementing agencies. He is leery of looking too deeply into their public participation. Hietpas responded that is not what she is suggesting, she just wants to be informed – even if it’s at the meeting.

Taylor asked who is holding Counties accountable. He discussed how uncomfortable he felt at the Lebanon Hills discussion.

Wulff discussed the list provided from Dakota County regarding who they met with and felt their engagement was quite extensive. She noted that she personally followed up with Dakota County Staff to ensure that they did extensive outreach and engagement. She felt sometimes people disagree and there is a need to have hard discussion. She passed on a story of a person she met from the disabled community who shared her perception that disabled people are not welcome in Lebanon Hills Regional Park.

Youngquist asked if including portions of a master plan that showed how applications are meeting policy would help. Hietpas felt that would be helpful.

Holly Jenkins, from Wilderness in the City, suggested starting public engagement sooner so a plan can be built together. She noted she had a handout entitled “Connecting Communities as Local Partners in Public Engagement” that she was willing to share. She also discussed ‘professional skepticism’ and stated how important it is to ask questions.

Wulff clarified that she was sharing the feelings of what someone had shared with her regarding the process of the Lebanon Hills Master Plan. Part of equity is that you can’t tell others how to feel.

Catherine Zimmer discussed her past work and how she learned to be skeptical. She shared her concern that the work she put into her comments today were dismissed.

## **REPORTS**

**Chair:** None.

**Commissioners:** None.

**Staff:** Mullin stated he will send out an email regarding the summer schedule.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**7:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle  
Recording Secretary