

## Minutes of the

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

Tuesday, November 10, 2015

#### Committee Members Present:

Rick Theisen, Dean Johnston, Sarah Hietpas, Bill Weber, Michael Kopp, Anthony Taylor, and Wendy Wulff, Council Liaison

**Committee Members Absent:** Todd Kemery, Robert Moeller, and Rachel Gillespie

#### CALL TO ORDER

Chair Johnston called the meeting of the Council's Special Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10, 2015.

#### APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Johnston asked for a motion to approve the Agenda of the November 10, 2015 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Weber motioned and it was seconded by Hietpas. **Agenda was approved.**

Chair Johnston asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2015 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Theisen motioned and it was seconded by Weber. **Minutes were approved.**

#### BUSINESS

**Land Exchange and Boundary Amendment, Spring Lake Park Reserve, Dakota County – Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst**

Youngquist gave a presentation on the request from Dakota County for a land exchange and a boundary amendment as outlined in the materials provided.

Wulff commented that she is pleased to see this type of creative exchange.

Theisen asked what does 'quick take' involve. Youngquist stated that in this case there was a federal grant for trail construction so Dakota County was allowed to 'take' immediate possession of the property with a settlement hearing to come later.

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

1. Approve a land exchange at Spring Lake Park Reserve that exchanges 16.06 acres of regional parkland that is used for agricultural purposes for 8.26 acres of wooded bluff land along Spring Lake within the Mississippi River, as depicted in Attachment 1.
2. Approve a master plan boundary amendment to Spring Lake Park Reserve that removes a total of 31.78 acres from the park reserve boundary, including 16.06 acres of existing regional parkland and an adjacent 15.72 acre parcel that is a privately owned inholding, as depicted in Attachment 2.

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

**Land Exchange Agreement Extension, Cottage Grove Regional Ravine Regional Park, Washington County – Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst**

Youngquist gave a presentation on a request from Washington County for an amendment for a land exchange as outlined in the materials provided.

Kopp asked if there is no guarantee that land will become available, why a timeline is being imposed. Youngquist stated that this will provide the option of using an equally valuable facility exchange if land does not become available. It also creates a timeline for completing the action. She noted that typically land exchanges in the regional parks system are done all at one time, and not delayed into the future.

Hietpas asked about the awkward boundary surrounding the two parcels given up. John Elholm, Washington County Parks explained that the parcels taken out of the park were flat farmland. He discussed that the majority of the park includes significant ravines and other topography that form this park's unique boundary.

Hietpas asked if current inholdings identified would remain within the boundary of the park if there is a facility exchange. Youngquist stated that the boundary and identified inholdings would remain the same. Elholm added that they are identified in the park's master plan.

Weber felt that this is a good deal for the park and noted that this is a very unique property.

Wulff clarified that the seven year timeline does not mean the implementing agency is no longer going to try to acquire inholdings. She noted that if the exchange was satisfied with an equally valuable facility, then Washington County would continue to be eligible for funding.

Johnston stated that he feels giving up park land for a building compromises our mission to preserve open space.

Youngquist discussed where this has happened in the past. She referenced Bunker Hills Regional Park where trails are being built in exchange for a sliver of land.

Theisen asked is a 'facility' a structure or a trail. Youngquist reviewed the definition and stated that a trail would be a recreational facility.

Theisen asked how often does this type of an exception happen. Youngquist noted that this agreement was done by former staff and approved by a former Council before her time.

Taylor asked how the value of the land is determined to then establish an equally valuable facility. Youngquist stated the value is determined during the time when the action occurs.

Taylor asked what penalties would be if they did not comply. Youngquist stated there would be potential for withholding Regional Park funding.

It was motioned by Weber and seconded by Kopp to recommend that the Metropolitan Council approve an amendment to the Land Exchange Agreement between the Metropolitan Council and Washington County for Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park dated February 2008, subject to the following conditions:

- Allow an acre for acre land replacement or an equally valuable facility exchange within Cottage Grove Regional Park that is acceptable to the Council to fulfill the remaining obligations of replacing 13.36 acres that were removed from the regional park.
- Provide a final extension of the expiration date to December 31, 2022, with consequences including, but not limited to, withholding regional parks funding to Washington County if the terms of the agreement are not met by the expiration date.

Johnston stated that he has trouble with potentially reducing the open space.

Weber explained all inholdings would still be a part of the master plan and eligible for acquisition, it's just a question of who would pay for it.

Youngquist explained that the removal of open space has already occurred. They are not looking to remove more open space.

Hietpas noted 'facilities' would have to meet Council approval.

Weber asked if there is an alternative to this deal. Youngquist stated that the current terms of the agreement expire at the end of this year and we do not have any recourse. This is an attempt to come to an equitable conclusion.

Johnston feels the only option would be to remove the 'facilities' option.

Wulff stated that the downside of doing that is if there are no willing sellers by 2022, the extension question comes up again. She feels it is in the Council's best interest to resolve this.

Taylor clarified that a new agreement will be drawn up. Youngquist confirmed and stated that it would be negotiated and drafted between the Council's Legal staff and Washington County.

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

### **Master Plan Boundary Adjustment Amendment, Lake Waconia Regional Park, Coney Island, Carver County – Michael Peterka**

Peterka gave a presentation on a request from Carver County to amend the boundary at Lake Waconia Regional Park as outlined in the materials provided.

Hietpas asked why this wasn't done sooner. Marty Walsh, Carver County Parks stated that this has been on their radar for a long time but had multiple owners. Currently there is only one owner and he would like to see the land preserved, so the time is right.

Youngquist explained how an implementing agency is not likely to spend money on planning (a master plan) until there is a likelihood of acquisition.

Kathryn Zimmer, a metropolitan resident, discussed the natural pristine condition of the land and asked if the owner is going to require a conservation easement.

Walsh responded no, but stated the County would be restoring the natural features of the island, as guided by the future master planning amendment effort. He noted that the land is not really pristine and is in fact somewhat overgrown and in need of some stewardship. He also acknowledged that there are also many attributes on the land worth preserving.

It was motioned by Hietpas seconded by Taylor to recommend that the Metropolitan Council approve an amendment to the boundary of Lake Waconia Regional Park to add the 33.77 acre property known as Coney Island as shown in Attachment A.

Wulff suggested a new picture before this goes to the Community Development Committee.

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

## **REPORTS**

**Chair:** Johnston reminded the Commission that the MPOSC is required to have a Vice Chair. He hopes to make that appointment at the next meeting and welcomes any comments from Commissioners.

**Commissioners:** Weber discussed the topic of diversity in MN Parks and Rec Magazine and encouraged folks to read it.

Taylor noted that he was at the Policy Link Equity Summit in Los Angeles two weeks ago and noted much of the work of the Met Council was discussed.

**Staff:** None.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**5:17 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle  
Recording Secretary

Attachment

Attachment A: Overview of Coney Island, the location of the proposed boundary amendment property, in relation to the existing Lake Waconia Regional Park.

