

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, March 5, 2019

Committee Members Present:

Rick Theisen, Anthony Taylor, Michael Kopp, Tony Yarusso, Catherine Fleming, Anthony Taylor, Wendy Wulff, liaison to the Council

Committee Members Absent:

Sarah Hietpas, Todd Kemery, Margie Andreason, Bob Moeller

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:05 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, 2019.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the March 5, 2019 Agenda. It was motioned by Kopp and seconded by Theisen to approve the agenda. The **agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2019 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. It was motioned by Kopp and seconded by Theisen. The recording secretary noted that Anthony Taylor was listed as both present and absent. Taylor confirmed that he was absent. Chair Yarusso called for a vote on the motion with the stated correction. The **minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

A representative from Save Breck Woods, Steven Ahlgren, spoke about an effort to save Breck Woods in Lauderdale, MN. He discussed concerns about the heat index if this property is developed. He stated more information can be found on their website: savebreckwoods.com.

BUSINESS

2019-51 Lebanon Hills Regional Park Utility Change, Dakota County – Tracey Kinney, Planner

Kinney gave a presentation on the request from Dakota County for a utility easement in Lebanon Hills Regional Park as outlined in the materials provided. She noted that the Connector Trail does not yet exist and it is internal to the park. The County will undertake a feasibility study in 2021 to help determine the alignment.

Fleming asked what would happen if there was no exchange and Xcel just gave up their easement. Jeff Bransford, Dakota County stated that the upgrade improvements by Great River Energy would not be made and the Xcel line will become obsolete.

Mullin noted that the current utilities run through the middle of the park. The benefit is that the new easement will run along the periphery of the park.

Chair Yarusso asked if the new easement is adjacent to the road right of way. Bransford confirmed that it would be.

It was motioned by Theisen and seconded by Taylor to recommend the that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Consent to an easement to allow Dakota County to issue a 4.04-acre utility easement to Great River Energy to upgrade the existing 69-kV transmission line to a double circuit 115-kV transmission line.
2. Advise Dakota County that Minnesota Management and Budget must consent to Dakota County's easement described in recorded Declaration #3235301

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

2019-28 Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Robert Piram Regional Trail, Various Easements, City of Saint Paul – Deb Jensen, Senior Parks Financial Planner

Jensen gave a presentation on a request for an acquisition opportunity fund grant for 8 easements for Robert Piram Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

Mullin asked Jensen to talk about what was learned during this request process. Jensen felt that next time a bundled request is made, we would handle the five separate landowner requests individually.

Kopp asked who pays for the appraisals. Jensen stated that the city pays and can request reimbursement. She noted that there were individual appraisals for each parcel.

It was motioned by Taylor and seconded by Kopp to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$134,303 to the City of Saint Paul to acquire eight trail easements comprising 54,902 square feet of permanent easements at the following locations in the City of Saint Paul for the Robert Piram Regional Trail:
 - a. Parcels 1 and 2: Summit LLP, 345 Plato Boulevard East –10,562 square-feet in two parcels;
 - b. Parcel 3: RBP Realty LLC, 264 Lafayette Frontage Road East – 9,302 square feet;
 - c. Parcel 4: Catholic Charities, 341 Chester Street – 5,181 square feet;
 - d. Parcel 5: Riverview Triangle LLC, 380 Chester Street – 15,479 square feet; and
 - e. Parcels 6, 7, and 8: Eaton Street LLC, 301 Eaton Street – 14,378 square feet in three parcels.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenants on behalf of the Council;
3. Consider reimbursing the City for up to \$44,767 from its share of a future Regional Parks Bonding Program; and
4. Inform the City that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that the Council will grant future reimbursement and that expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

2018-334 Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission Bylaws Update – Emmett Mullin, Manager

Mullin reviewed the principal reason for updating the by-laws, which is to move the meeting day from Tuesday to Thursday, as well as a make a few other minor changes that are considered 'housekeeping' issues.

Chair Yarusso noted that the original motion was made in December by Theisen and seconded by Andreason to recommend that the Metropolitan Council approve the updated Bylaws of the

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (see Attachment 1), changing the regular meeting of the Commission to the first Thursday of each month and making other housekeeping changes.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

INFORMTION

Equity Grant Program Update – Emmett Mullin, Manager and Amanda Lovelee, Senior Outreach Coordinator

Mullin and Lovelee gave an update on the development of the competitive Equity Grant Program.

Mullin discussed the four phases of the program development.

Lovelee discussed the question bursts that were done as part of the idea exploration, and the four areas that emerged – Why, How, Funding, and Future. She stated that the question bursts were done with staff, MPOSC, the Equity Advisory Committee, and the park implementing agencies. She stated that many similarities were found.

Lovelee discussed a prioritization exercise done with the same four groups and requested the Commission do it today. Next Lovelee passed out an exercise and Commissioners were given time to complete the exercise.

Taylor discussed community engagement and stated we need to rethink our strategies around equity at the regional park system level, and not just for each park individually.

Chair Yarusso discussed the timeline and when to initiate the application process? If it remained focused on capital only, it may be very limited. He stated we need to search for ways to have this program be more regional and with less infrastructure. Then it will be more successful.

Fleming asked what is meant by competitive. Mullin stated it's competitive between projects (cross agencies).

Chair Yarusso questioned if two agencies work together on a project, is it considered competitive. Mullin stated staff are open to what this program will become and noted we are in the formative stage.

Fleming asked if there is a maximum amount per project? Lovelee stated that this is one of the things we are trying to determine.

Fleming discussed complaints she's heard from Minneapolis including how most of the funding goes to specific programs. They are looking for capital investments.

Mullin stated that one of the themes that is emerging from the early discussions is having this program encourage possible equity partnerships.

Wulff discussed Taylor's comment on community engagement and while this program cannot pay for community engagement, a capital project can include community engagement.

Taylor discussed third party community engagement.

Mullin noted that staff will continue to work on this and will bring an information item back to MPOSC for discussion.

Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for the Minnesota River Bluffs Regional Trail Update, Carver County (Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority) - – Deb Jensen, Senior Parks Financial Planner

Jensen gave a presentation on a park acquisition opportunity fund grant request for the Minnesota River Bluff's Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided. She stated this item was presented today for information only and will be brought back in June or July for action.

Chair Yarusso asked if the construction project will put ENRTF funds in jeopardy. Jensen stated staff are being very transparent, so she did not believe so. Mullin noted that they've walked the property with LCCMR staff members and they are excited about the project. This request will need to gain a two-thirds majority from LCCMR Commissioners.

Jensen discussed the public to public transfer questions. She also noted MnDOT holds a 'mortgage' on the property. Work is underway to release the mortgage.

Mullin noted that Commissioner Moeller, who was unable to attend today's meeting, is meeting regularly on this topic with his groups and is in support of keeping this complex project on track.

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso stated that there was a vote to replace ENRTF bonds with General Obligation bonds at the Legislature today and it passed, which will provide \$10 million in state bonds and \$6.67 million in regional bonds to the park agencies.

Chair Yarusso noted that the new Council Members have been appointed and while Wendy Wulff was reappointed, she will no longer be the liaison to this Commission. He thanked Wulff for her dedication to this Commission and the Regional Parks System.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Mullin thanked Wulff for her help and stated that she has been a great advisor to this Commission.

Mullin stated that the Fund Distribution Policy did pass the Council last Wednesday. He noted that the companion document, the Subrecipient Administrative Guide, is under development.

Mullin noted that there was an event at the Minnesota History Center, celebrating the 10-year Legacy Amendment anniversary. He noted that Anthony Taylor was one of the featured speakers and thanked him for this role.

Mullin stated that there are 4 open seats on the Commission, Districts E, F, G, and H. He announced that Hietpas and Kopp are not planning to reapply.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary