

Minutes of the Meeting of the

METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Thursday, September 2, 2021

Committee Members Present: Assata Brown, Cecily Harris, Todd Kemery, Monica Dillenburg, Robert Moeller, Tony Yarusso, Cana Yang, Anthony Taylor, Jeremy Peichel

Committee Members Absent: Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, liaison to the Council.

CALL TO ORDER

The Recording Secretary did a roll call for a quorum.

Present – 9 (Brown, Dillenburg, Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Taylor, Yang, Yarusso)

Absent - 0

With a quorum being present via WebEx, Commission Chair Yarusso called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:08 p.m. on Thursday, September 2, 2021.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso motioned to approve the September 2, 2021, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission agenda and asked for a consensus to approve the agenda.

Next, Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the August 5, 2021 minutes. Kemery motioned, and it was seconded by Dillenburg to approve the August 5, 2021 minutes of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting.

The Recording Secretary issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 6 (Brown, Dillenburg, Harris, Kemery, Yang, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 1 (Peichel)

The motion was approved.

PUBLIC INVITATION

Chair Yarusso stated we have no people who pre-registered to speak today. As a reminder, if you wish to offer public comment at a virtual meeting, please pre-register by emailing public.info@metc.state.mn.us. You may also send us your comments by email.

BUSINESS

2021-229, Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board –
Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst

Kelly gave a presentation on the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan submitted by Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) as outlined in the materials provided.

Brown asked about the portion of Lynnhurst Park, within the regional trail corridor and why it was being excluded. Kelly noted that the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan states ball diamonds and tennis courts are to be excluded from the regional parks system.

Harris asked if the Lynnhurst Park will be excluded for visitor counts? Kelly stated the active “local park” users, i.e., hockey rinks, soccer and ball diamonds, would not be counted.

Harris referred to segment 1 and the lack of legibility as a public park and asked, what does that mean? Kelly explained that paved regional trail corridor does not

extend into segment one, however natural surface trails and the Minnehaha Creek intersect this area.

Harris asked, what is a waterside lounge? Madeline Hudek, MPRB stated that it is an area near the creek where visitors could gather and have access to the creek, but it is not a formal boat launch.

A motion made by Harris and seconded by Peichel to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan, including the addition of two parcels detailed in this report and the supplemental information provided in the submittal letter dated June 7, 2021, with the exception of classifying existing tennis courts as "regional."
2. Require Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

Taylor asked if any thought was given to linking the corridor to MPRB's recreation or community centers. Adam Arvidson, MRPB responded that there are future plans to convert the Lynnhurst Community Center into a nature center that will serve the southern half of the Minneapolis System, in the same way that the nature center at North Mississippi Regional Park serves the northern portion of the city. MPRB's future Comprehensive District Plan will show how these future connections will be made.

Kemery stated he appreciates the ADA consideration that was shown in the plan. He asked whether the nature play areas will accommodate children with special needs. Hudek discussed the area and stated they will be designed to be accessible. Kemery noted that not every trail had to be a hard surface trail. Also, he discussed ways to address slope challenges posed by trails. He told MPRB staff that he is available to consult with them around issues of accessibility. Arvidson thanked Kemery and clarified that the nature play area planned does not currently exist, but when constructed it will be accessible.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote. The recording secretary issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 9 (Brown, Harris, Dillenburg, Moeller, Kemery, Peichel, Taylor, Yang, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 0

The motion was approved.

2021-221, Cleary Lake Regional Park Master Plan Amendment and Land Conversion, Three Rivers Park District County - Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst

Kelly gave a presentation on the Cleary Lake Regional Park Master Plan Amendment and land conversion requested by Three Rivers Park District (3RPD) as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked about the public engagement that was done. Nathan Moe, 3RPD stated there was not a significant amount of engagement done. Staff from different agencies and departments provided input and there were public open houses on the construction project.

Kelly Grissman, 3RPD, discussed why this project was being proposed, and how it has been under development for years.

Peichel referred to figure 4 and asked if there are any concerns about drainage from the right of way to Cleary Lake, with particular concerns about chloride pollution. Moe responded that they have done some analysis. He felt there shouldn't be a significant increase from the current state.

Peichel referred to figure 5 and stated it seems like the channel goes through hole 9 of the Cleary Lake Golf Course. He asked, how much responsibility for this project will be placed on the golf course and

management. Moe noted that 3RPD owns and manages the golf course, and as such has responsibility for the natural resource project.

Peichel asked about long-term maintenance funding and if it will be available to ensure long-term maintenance. Moe stated they are working with their maintenance team to do maintenance annually.

A motion made by Taylor and seconded by Dillenburg to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Cleary Lake Regional Park Master Plan Amendment and Land Conversion.
2. Approve the permanent release of the restrictive covenant on 2.21 acres of land and the temporary release of the restrictive covenant on 1.41 acres of land within Cleary Lake Regional Park – a total of 3.62 acres – in exchange for a channel stabilization project within Cleary Lake Regional Park.

Peichel stated he is not in support of this motion and would like to see more planning for runoff and sediment management.

Harris stated she also does not support the motion because of the loss of park land being proposed.

Chair Yarusso asked what Peichel would like to see? Peichel stated more engagement with the Highway Department on how to reduce environmental threats to the lake and regional park. He would like to see a berm or deeper ditching to block the flow of runoff from the road. He added that he has concerns about the channel that runs to the lake because it will convey phosphorus and sediment from the golf course.

Mullin stated that when there is a land exchange, staff evaluate and ensure there is an equally beneficial exchange. He noted that the Regional Parks Policy Plan directs staff to first determine whether there is an equally valuable land exchange. In this case, there was not land available, at this point 3RPD went with the equally valuable facility exchange option.

Dillenburg stated she has seen transportation-related exchanges like this before, and she feels the park district need to balance the benefits of the transportation improvements with the best “exchange” scenario. She feels in this case, the result is a positive improvement.

Chair Yarusso stated calling a ‘project’ a ‘facility’ is a first. He feels like this is really a stewardship effort that needs to be done regardless.

Mullin added that there was no land available for a land exchange, and the Regional Parks Policy Plan (RPPP) allows for facility exchanges, both the constructed facilities and natural resource improvements.

Peichel asked if ‘facility’ is inclusive of natural resource projects? Mullin affirmed and read the language from the RPPP.

Moeller stated he feels the amount of land is small and the benefit of the exchange is significant.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote. The recording secretary issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 6 (Brown, Dillenburg, Moeller, Kemery, Taylor, Yang)

Nay – 3 (Harris, Peichel, Yarusso)

Abstention – 0

The motion was approved.

2021-222, Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment and Land Conversion, and Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan Amendment, Anoka County - Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner

Kinney gave a presentation on the Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment and land conversion as well as the Riverfront Regional Park Master Plan Amendment requested by Anoka County as outlined in the materials provided.

Dillenburg asked about the difference in the appraisal amounts between the removal and replacement land. Karen Blaska, Anoka County Parks stated that she worked with the County Assessor's office to get the land valuation. She noted that these two properties are both the exact same size, .33 acre. While the removal land has a slightly higher value, the replacement land includes Mississippi River shoreline, which is more desirable for Anoka County.

Blaska added that the City of Minneapolis will restore the removal land after the transfer.

A motion made by Peichel and seconded by Brown to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Mississippi River Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Approve the Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park Acquisition Master Plan Amendment.
3. Approve the release of the restrictive covenant on 0.33 acres of land within the Mississippi River Regional Trail in exchange for adding 0.33 acres of land with a restrictive covenant to expand the boundary of the Anoka County Riverfront Regional Park.
4. Require Anoka County, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

Peichel commented that he was glad to hear about the restoration to be done.

Chair Yarusso stated he appreciates this land for land exchange.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote. The recording secretary issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 9 (Brown, Harris, Dillenburg, Moeller, Kemery, Peichel, Taylor, Yang, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 0

The motion was approved.

2021-223 Big Marine Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment and Land Conversion, Washington County - Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner

Kinney gave a presentation on the Big Marine Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment and land conversion request from Washington County as outline in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked about the land exchange and the parcels involved. Kinney explained that the Veterans Camp approached Washington County staff ahead of Washington County working on identifying replacement land.

Sharon Price, Washington County, added that once they learned of the possible removal, Washington County worked to identify possible parcels to use in the exchange. They met with the City of Scandia and discovered that Scandia owned a parcel within the administrative boundary of the park reserve and were willing to transfer it to Washington County.

Harris stated she supports this project and asked if the conservation easement is being kept on the 2.42 acres of land being removed. Kinney stated no, the covenant will be removed.

A motion made by Dillenburg and seconded by Harris to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Big Marine Park Reserve Master Plan Amendment.
2. Approve the release of the restrictive covenant on 2.42-acres of land within the Big Marine Park Reserve in exchange for adding a restrictive covenant on 2.42-acres of land within the boundary of Big Marine Park Reserve.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote. The recording secretary issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 9 (Brown, Harris, Dillenburg, Moeller, Kemery, Peichel, Taylor, Yang, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 0

The motion was approved.

INFORMATION

Equity “Nudge” – Reflections on Recent Regional Parks Research: The Visitors Study, Youth and Parks, and More - Darcie Vandegrift, Principal Researcher

Vandegrift gave a presentation on her equity reflections from a recent Regional Parks Research - Youth and Parks Study. She offered that she would be happy to connect off-line or come back to another meeting to discuss the study’s findings. She shared the link to the research:

<https://metro council.org/parks/research/youth-parks.aspx>

Chair Yarusso asked about the study on non-visitors to the Regional Parks System, and the barriers to visiting including safety concerns. He stated he is curious about perceptions verses experiences.

Vandegrift stated that the Youth in Parks Study collected quite a bit of data on this topic, including discussions about how to alleviate safety concerns as a barrier. She noted staff are doing a 2021 Visitor Study using more open-ended questions to pursue topics such as safety.

Harris asked if the study looked at the difference between people identifying as female verses male and safety. Vandegrift noted there is a gender component in the data.

Chair Yarusso encouraged members to send additional feedback by email.

REPORTS

Chair: None.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Mullin introduced new staff member, Chee Yang. He also noted that the September 17 Bdote tour has been cancelled due to the ongoing pandemic and the increased concerns about the Delta variant. He stated staff hope to reschedule the tour in Spring 2022.

Mullin added that there will not be any Fall MPOSC tours, again due to the Delta variant.

Mullin discussed the upcoming Special MPOSC Meeting around the “Stories I Didn’t Know” documentary. This will be a great learning opportunity for Commissioners and staff alike, on Thursday, September 30th. He noted another email on this topic will be sent out soon.

Council Liaison: None.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary