

Minutes of the Meeting of the

METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Thursday, August 5, 2021

Committee Members Present: Assata Brown, Cecily Harris, Todd Kemery, Monica Dillenburg, Robert Moeller, Tony Yarusso, Cana Yang, and Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, liaison to the Council.

Committee Members Absent: Anthony Taylor, Jeremy Peichel

CALL TO ORDER

The Recording Secretary did a roll call for a quorum.

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 4:06 p.m. on Thursday, August 5, 2021.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso motioned to approve the August 5, 2021, Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission agenda and asked for a consensus to approve the agenda.

With a quorum present, Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the July 1, 2021 minutes. Dillenburg motioned, and it was seconded by Moeller to approve the July 1, 2021 minutes of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting. The Recording Secretary issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 4 (Brown, Dillenburg, Moeller, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 2 (Harris, Kemery)

The July 1, 2021 minutes were 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. Thank you.

BUSINESS

2021-206, Bruce Vento Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment, Ramsey County – Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst

Kelly gave a presentation on the Bruce Vento Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment as outlined in the materials provided.

Kemery asked about the segment without funding and asked for clarification. Kelly stated that Segment 4, at this point, did not have funding available for development, however, he noted that Ramsey County is seeking available funding. He noted that Segment 3 has been fully planned and will be the next part of the trail to be constructed.

Kemery asked what the timeline is. Kelly stated as soon as funding has been secured. He noted that Segment 3 construction is scheduled to begin in 2024.

Scott Yonke, Ramsey County stated that Segment 3 is nearing completion on final design, however, they have not secured construction funding and anticipate construction in 2024-2026. He stated Segment 4 is still seeking final design and construction funding.

Harris asked about the additional dotted line in Figure 2 and whether this is a planned alignment with Washington County? Kelly noted the dashed line is the

southern segment of the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail, which is still in the planned category.

Harris asked about climate change, how can landscape be established to provide visitors along the trail shade. Kelly discussed the considerable plantings to be implemented along the trail. Yonke added that as Ramsey County goes forward with planning, it is their goal to take into account climate change and the hotter and wetter conditions.

Harris asked about the huge increase in electric bikes on trails and if Saint Paul/Ramsey County has any policies on this? Yonke stated he cannot speak for Saint Paul, however, Ramsey County has looked into the topic and has plans to create stronger policy language. Chair Yarusso stated he believes the DNR has worked with the State Legislature to create a law regarding electric bikes.

Brown asked Yonke about the letter from Ramsey County's Park and Recreation Commission and their concern regarding community engagement? Yonke stated the County is implementing strategies to improve their engagement and equity processes. Going forward, he added, they plan to continue to utilize the equity tools that were not available when this plan's engagement was done.

Dillenburg stated she is concerned with private property that is adjacent to the trail alignment and asked how this is handled. Kelly stated that this is an important concern. The Ramsey County portion of the Vento Trail has always included the transit component, first light rail and now Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). There will be some impacts, but the trail will be accommodated within the existing corridor that includes the right of way.

Yonke added, as they move forward, additional acquisitions are required including easements, however, he noted, their goal is to keep the trail/transit within existing corridor.

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

1. Approve Ramsey County's Bruce Vento Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Inform Ramsey County that, when Segment 4 alignments have been finalized, it must submit a future master plan amendment to update regional trail boundaries and acquisition costs.
3. Require Ramsey County, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division Assistant Manager.

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

Aye – 7 (Brown, Harris, Dillenburg, Moeller, Kemery, Yang, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 0

The motion was approved.

INFORMATION

Overview of the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Program - Jessica Lee, Senior Parks Planner

Lee gave an overview of the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Program (PAOF) as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked about the practice of implementing agencies contributing their 25% local match requirement -- are they still able to ask for reimbursement consideration, if requested up front? Also, he noted that the Parks and Trails Legacy fund and Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) are both matched with Council bonds through this program. He asked about the rules for ENRTF, and whether they may be used for habitable structures? Lee stated only habitable structures of value are ineligible for reimbursement. She noted that the future reimbursement consideration program, which is a part of the Regional Parks Bonding Program, is "on-pause" right now due to an IRS rule change.

Chair Yarusso asked for clarification on the issues around a habitable structure with value? Lee stated that the Council and Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota's Resources prioritizes using these funds for conserving land.

Developing a Post-Covid Understanding for Our Work Together – Emmett Mullin, Manager Parks

Mullin discussed post COVID meeting structure and stated that the Council is closely looking at the Delta variant and pandemic developments. He stated the Council will follow the Governor's lead as well as the Minnesota Department of Health direction.

Mullin discussed the survey that was sent out to Commissioners and our liaison regarding meeting in person. He stated that some feel in-person meetings would be preferred, when it's deemed safe. He added that some did not feel safe. He also stated that many expressed interest in tours. Mullin stated there will not be a September tour and that we are considering an October one. He added that many expressed interest in a hybrid option but for now, this is not an option.

Chair Yarusso stated determination is based on safety. That determination is being made by the Met Council Chair. He felt that decision could also be made by the Regional Administrator and/or himself as the MPOSC Chair. He hoped that after all we have learned from the pandemic, the open meeting law language should be changed to allow for the use of innovative technology, including hybrid meetings. Atlas-Ingebretson agreed and discussed creating a more accessible and inclusive body with current technology. She feels being able to participate remotely increases access and inclusivity.

Harris noted that her wi-fi is unreliable, so it is difficult to continue in this format for our meetings.

Moeller noted he lives a far distance from Saint Paul and winter travel, at his age, is more of a problem. He felt that today's meeting shows that in person meetings are better (due to technical difficulties) and he supports them, the opportunity for hybrid meetings at times could be helpful.

Dillenburg stated she is fine with whatever the Council decides to do.

Shared Equity Learning: Bdote Tour and *Stories I Didn't Know* Opportunity - Amanda Lovelee, Senior Outreach Coordinator

Lovelee gave a presentation on 'Learning from Place: Bdote and Stories I Didn't Know'. She also discussed the September 17 tour/workshop from 8:30am-2:30pm that will begin at Fort Snelling State Park and end at Indian Mound Regional Park. Mullin stated he will share a link to this documentary and noted there will be a facilitated discussion of it on September 30, 2021, from 3-4pm.

Mullin noted the MN Humanities Center has good COVID practices. He noted that he will send an email with a link.

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso reiterated new process to speak under 'Public Invitation' by pre-registering. He also noted that tours are in the works. He also stated that Ramsey County is doing public engagement regarding park hours. They will also be reassessing how violations of park and trail ordinances are categorized and are looking to downgrade them to petty misdemeanors. There is more information on the Ramsey County website.

Commissioners: Kemery stated the DNR reached out to him to add more accessibility in Parks and Trails and he will be working with them.

Staff: None.

Council Liaison: Atlas-Ingebretson was asked to serve on DNR Commission to look at funding sources, etc. She also discussed the Outdoor Recreation Task Force outcomes, and she is looking forward to sharing more regarding this work.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary