

Minutes of the

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, November 14, 2017

Committee Members Present:

Tony Yarusso, Rick Theisen, Catherine Fleming, Todd Kemery, Margie Andreason, Mike Kopp, Bob Moeller, Wendy Wulff

Committee Members Absent:

Sarah Hietpas, Anthony Taylor

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the special meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:01 p.m. on Tuesday, November 14, 2017.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the November 14, 2017 Agenda. Yarusso motioned with an amendment to add introductions (due to new commissioner) and it was seconded by Kemery to approve the amended agenda. The **Agenda was approved as amended.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2017 special meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. It was motioned by Moeller and seconded by Kemery. The **Minutes were approved.**

INTRODUCTIONS

Catherine Fleming introduced herself, representing District D in Minneapolis.

PUBLIC INVITATION

None.

BUSINESS

2017-256, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Baker/Carver Regional Trail (Kucher), Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund, Three Rivers Park District – Deb Jensen, Senior Planner, Finance

Jensen made a presentation on an acquisition grant request for Baker/Carver Regional Trail from Three Rivers Park District (TRPD) as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked if Six Mile Creek is navigable by canoe and what, if any other trails, connect to the corridor. Stephan Shurson, a Landscape Architect with TRPD, stated that the creek is navigable by canoe, but not larger boats. He is not aware of any other intersecting trails.

Fleming asked if this acquisition will require a re-writing of the property deeds? Shurson stated that the Park District intends to purchase six parcels, combine and subdivide the property into two new parcels, and sell the surplus parcel to Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. TRPD is requesting grant funding for only the portion of the property that it will permanently retain.

Fleming asked if there are any concerns about contamination from any adjacent lands. Shurson stated there are no known concerns.

Chair Yarusso asked if TRPD plans to develop any additional facilities in this area (i.e., trailhead parking). Shurson stated that the neighbors are opposed to development of trail amenities in this area. At this point, they are just looking to develop the trail in this segment.

Andreason asked what are some of the reasons for opposition. Shurson stated that security and privacy concerns were raised during public meetings.

Kemery asked where the trail head is located? Shurson stated that there are significant trailhead amenities at Baker Park Reserve, Gayle Woods Farm and Carver Park Reserve.

Kemery asked about the accessibility of the trail, including the trail surfacing? Shurson stated that the trail will be 8-10 feet wide, bituminous with boardwalks over the creek and wetland areas.

Chair Yarusso asked how much of the proposed trail is owned by TRPD. Jonathan Vlaming, TRPD, stated that most of the trail is located within the road right of way. He stated further that a remaining challenge with the trail development will be getting it across Six Mile Creek.

It was motioned by Moeller and seconded by Kemery to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$250,274 to Three Rivers Park District to acquire the Kucher parcels at 3910 and 3940 Farmhill Circle in Minnetrista for Baker to Carver Regional Trail;
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council;
3. Consider reimbursing Three Rivers Park District for up to \$83,425 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program for costs associated with this acquisition; and
4. Inform Three Rivers Park District that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that the Council will grant reimbursement in the future and a Regional Parks Implementing Agency is not entitled to reimbursement because of the expenditure of local funds.

Moeller noted that this is a marvelous trail master plan and a great long-term plan. He strongly supports it.

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

2017-257 Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Lake Rebecca Park Reserve (Kunkel) Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, Three Rivers Park District – Deb Jensen, Senior Planner, Finance

Jensen provided a second presentation on a land acquisition for Lake Rebecca Park Reserve from TRPD, as outlined in the materials provided.

Wulff provided background information on the different sources of funding for the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund program and the reasons for selecting the Legacy Fund for this particular acquisition (there is a structure located on the property to be acquired).

Fleming asked if there were concerns about whether park agencies would be able to use the full Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation for land acquisition? Jensen stated that while there was a healthy balance in this particular account, this funding source is in high demand and will most likely be fully utilized.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$302,944 to Three Rivers Park District to acquire the Kunkel parcel at 8580 Rebecca Park Trail for Lake Rebecca Park Reserve;

2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council;
3. Consider reimbursing Three Rivers Park District for up to \$100,981 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program for costs associated with this acquisition; and
4. Inform Three Rivers Park District that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that the Council will grant reimbursement in the future and a Regional Parks Implementing Agency is not entitled to reimbursement because of the expenditure of local funds.

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

INFORMATION

2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update – Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst

Youngquist provided an update on the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan (2040 RPPP)* discussing background, rationale and timeline as outlined in the materials provided.

Fleming asked about accountability - who holds the Metropolitan Council accountable for the goals in the policy plan? Youngquist stated that during this update, we are looking at developing indicators to measure how we making progress toward our goals. Mullin added that there are multiple opportunities for input and public engagement throughout the process. He noted that the work we do provides opportunities for participation through the Council's process, which for Parks items begins with this Commission, then to the Community Development Committee, and finally the Metropolitan Council. There are additional opportunities for participation with the park agency processes.

Fleming asked about how accountability is built into the funding decisions. Jensen explained that the Council's parks programs operate on a reimbursement basis. The ten park implementing agencies plan, design, and construct projects and then request reimbursement. Jensen noted that the Council has internal auditors as does the state.

Fleming asked about jurisdictional authority within the parks. Kopp explained that the park agencies own and operate the park and trail facilities. Some agencies, including Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and TRPD, have their own police forces. Others agency's parks and trails fall under the police department of the jurisdiction in which they are located.

Theisen asked who enforces comprehensive plan compliance. Youngquist stated that the Council reviews every comprehensive plan. She noted that this review includes park boundaries.

Chair Yarusso suggested lining up the four-year policy plan required update with the larger 10-year Comprehensive Planning Update process. He stated he would also like to encourage regional park and trail boundary discussions to be Comprehensive Planning updates, particularly those where there are multiple jurisdictions involved. Youngquist provided the example of Crow River Regional Trail, where the master plan created for this trail cooperatively developed between TRPD and Wright County, a Greater Minnesota regional park provider. This trail weaves in and out of the seven-county metropolitan area, and has the potential of receiving Legacy funds from both of these agencies.

Wulff stated that the park implementing agencies regularly talk with their neighboring jurisdictions about cooperative park and trail projects.

Andreason thanked Youngquist for her presentation and stated it would be helpful to have get staff recommendations for topics for the Commission to discuss, related to the policy plan update. Help the Commissioners understand where we want their input.

Moeller mentioned that this project highlights the importance of having a common signage and branding approach for parks and trails across the region and Minnesota, so that the trail visitors can seamlessly use the larger system.

Parks Ambassador Program Update – Celina Martina, Senior Outreach Coordinator and Emmett Mullin, Manager of Regional Parks and Natural Resources Unit

Martina and Mullin provided an update on the Parks Ambassador Program as outlined in the materials provided.

Fleming asked if there are a wide range of ages of people included in this program's efforts, particularly in outreach efforts with Theodore Wirth Regional Park? Martina discussed the relationships she's created through outreach and engagement with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. This agency has an impressive outreach staff that works in this location. She stated that she's focusing her efforts in areas that do not duplicate our agencies' efforts, such as her work with smaller agencies that do not have dedicated outreach and engagement staff.

Mullin discussed a Rainy Salk's research done in 2014 that engaged a variety of people of color in the region, seeking to understand the reasons behind why people are not visiting regional parks and trails. Chair Yarusso suggested sending a link to this study to Fleming.

Andreason asked what is coming for the second year of the Ambassador program and how can the Commissioners support this work? Martina stated we are all ambassadors and we need to be intentional about building relationships with communities and individuals. She is looking forward to continuing work with the implementing agencies and looking for gaps and opportunities for engagement.

Moeller asked if there are measurable goals? If not, he would encourage it. Martina stated it is difficult to evaluate relationships from strictly a number perspective. That said, she stated that staff are currently tracking things that are happening with the program – including meetings with groups and organizations, gatherings, events, and phone calls.

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso noted that counties are doing their comprehensive plan updates and encouraged commissioners to engage in this process.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Mullin introduced Sandy Brewer, the new Director for Washington County Parks.

Mullin asked if there is any desire to move the January 2, 2018 MPOSC meeting (because it falls the day after the holiday). He stated that a poll will be sent out to determine the best date for the most people.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary