

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, August 4, 2015

Committee Members Present:

William Weber, Todd Kemery, Rick Theisen, Robert Moeller, Dean Johnston, Rachel Gillespie, Sarah Hietpas, Anthony Taylor, Michael Kopp, Wendy Wulff, Council Liaison

Committee Members Absent: None.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Johnston called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:01 p.m. on Tuesday, August 4, 2015.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Johnson asked for motion to approve the agenda of the August 4, 2015 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Weber motioned and it was seconded by Theisen. **The agenda was approved.**

Chair Johnston asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2015 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Kemery motioned and it was seconded by Weber. **Minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

Invitation to interested person(s) to address the Commission on matters not on the agenda.

Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District reported that they have reached out to Chaska, Chanhassen and Carver County to propose an alternate route for the MN River Bluffs Regional Trail (due to the damage to the trail). They hope to see the detour open within a week.

BUSINESS

Lake Elmo Park Reserve Boundary Amendment, Washington County – Michael Peterka, Intern

Peterka gave a presentation outlining the request from Washington County for a boundary amendment for Lake Elmo Park Reserve as detailed in the materials provided.

It was motioned by Kopp seconded by Hietpas to recommend that the Metropolitan Council approve a boundary amendment to the Lake Elmo Park Reserve Master Plan, adding an 18.2 acre parcel, as shown in Appendix A.

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

Johnston asked how this would provide a buffer to the gun range. Peterka noted that this would keep the gun range, located immediately to the east of this boundary, from expanding to the west and closer to the park.

Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Boundary Amendment – Michael Peterka, Intern

Peterka gave a presentation outlining the request from Scott County for a boundary amendment for Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve as detailed in the materials provided.

Youngquist added that the Blakeley Township administrator expressed concern over tax revenue loss and therefore they are opposed to the boundary

amendment. Youngquist stated that she contacted Patricia Freeman who described a long range plan where the intent is to evaluate the park reserve boundary when a development master plan is prepared in the future. She noted that there is FEMA money available now to aid in the acquisition of this property.

Johnston noted that this in no way changes the proposed recommendation from staff.

Peterka reviewed staff's recommendation.

Weber asked if the FEMA grant would be lost if this boundary amendment is not approved. Youngquist confirmed that it would.

Youngquist stated that long-range, the Township doesn't want to increase the size of the park and lose the property taxes. The Township would like the County to look at acquiring the land and in return remove other developable land from the park.

Derik Schultz, a resident of Blakeley Township, discussed the history of the park boundary. He would like to see a mechanism put into place that when an acquisition is made land is removed at that time – not later. He noted that the Township has not received a letter of intent to do this from the implementing agency as promised.

Wulff commented that Scott County has removed land from search areas voluntarily before. Because of FEMA money, she feels this should be done now.

Schultz also commented that the County Surveyor, in his opinion, is 'fuzzy' on where the property line is. He noted that his property abuts this parcel.

It was motioned by Moeller seconded by Gillespie to recommend that the Metropolitan Council approve a boundary amendment to the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Acquisition Master Plan to add three parcels totaling 105 acres as shown in Appendix A.

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

Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve, 15801 Blakeley Trail (Schendlinger), Scott County – Tori Dupre, Senior Planner

Dupre gave a presentation outlining the request from Scott County for an acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Blakeley Park Reserve detailed in the materials provided.

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

1. Authorize a grant of up to \$97,840 to Scott County to acquire a 29-acre property at 15801 Blakeley Trail for Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve. The Metropolitan Council will finance the grant through the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund using Metropolitan Council bonds for up to 75 percent of the total acquisition costs.
2. Acknowledge Scott County's grant match to finance at least 25 percent of the total acquisition costs. If the total acquisition costs are higher than estimated, Scott County is responsible for the difference.
3. Authorize the Community Development Director to sign the grant agreement including the restrictive covenant.

Theisen asked what the price per acre was. Weber stated it's about \$4,500 per acre.

Kemery asked if the house will be torn down. Dupre stated that she understood that it would be demolished.

Kemery asked how the 29 acres will be used. Dupre stated that the development master plan is yet to come.

Moeller asked once the structure is torn down will the area be left to go wild? Dupre stated that the development master plan usually outlines stewardship, restoration plans, etc. Paul Nelson, Scott County noted that the intent is to seed the area where the slope is and do minimal stewardship.

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

2012 CIP Grant Request for Theodore Wirth Regional Park, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board – Jan Youngquist, Manager

Youngquist gave a presentation for the 2012 CIP grant request for Theodore Wirth Regional Park from Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as detailed in the materials provided.

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

Approve a grant in the amount of \$198,000 from the 2012 Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program, comprised of \$164,000 in State bonds and \$34,000 in Council bonds. This grant shall be used toward design and construction consistent with the North Wirth concept in the master plan, including trail development, bridges, buildings, landscaping, grading, parking areas, lighting, downhill infrastructure, utilities, surveys and site investigations, design, and project management.

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

Lebanon Hills Regional Park Master Plan, Dakota County - Jan Youngquist, Manager with overview presentation from Steve Sullivan, Dakota County Parks Director

Steve Sullivan, Dakota County Parks Director gave a comprehensive overview of the Lebanon Hills Master Plan. He included the history of the park, the current needs of the park, and the public participation that took place in the development of this plan along with the concessions that were made due to concerns raised by citizens.

Chair Johnston reminded commission members of the role of the MPOSC to encourage parks/trails processes. He stated we are to look to see that master plans are consistent with the Regional Parks Policy Plan (RPPP). He added that the second role is with funding and to be sure that requests are consistent with the RPPP. He noted that if master plans and funding requests are found consistent with the RPPP, the commission needs to approve them.

Youngquist presented staff's evaluation of the master plan. She reviewed state statute on the role of this commission in reviewing master plans. She further discussed the Council's role in reviewing regional park master plans to ensure that the master plan is consistent with the RPPP and Council policies, and does not negatively impact the Council's other systems – Transportation, Aviation, and Wastewater Services. As long as the master plan meets the criteria in the RPPP, the type of development within a regional park is determined through the regional park implementing agency's master planning process and subsequent approval by its governing board.

Moeller discussed accessibility and the benefit of a paved trail in regards to ADA accessibility. He asked if all six miles would be necessary in order to be compliant with the ADA. Sullivan stated that this would accommodate many people and also offer year round accessibility – not just for disabled people.

Kemery noted that a 'comparable experience' doesn't equal a fixed number. He noted that the ADA does require that anything in the park must be accessible in order to be ADA compliant.

Hietpas asked if the paved connector trail dead ends at each end of the park or if there is other access. Sullivan responded that the trail connects to the seven features within the park. Its intent is to provide access within the park. He noted that they will be doing a study next year to see how a Greenway Regional Trail would tie in.

Theisen asked if the Met Council provides waivers to policy. Youngquist stated that our role is to see if the master plan is consistent with our RPPP. There is no waiver or variance policy.

Kopp asked if this is a stand-alone trail. Wulff noted that many of the roads surrounding the park have sidewalks that connect to the park.

Kopp asked if this trail is replacing a soft surface trail. Sullivan stated that it will not. The master plan includes adding 6 miles of paved trails and 3 miles of soft trails bringing the total miles of soft trails to 43. He noted that the alignment hasn't been completely planned yet.

Taylor discussed the comment that this would change the character of the experience. He feels these comments are from current users. He is concerned with the lack of comments from non-users. He feels we need to help decrease the fear of current users that this will change their experience. Sullivan discussed this fundamental topic during the planning process. He discussed the three alignments proposed and stated that the middle trail would increase the number of crossing with soft trails. They felt that the north proposed trail alignment of a paved trail would be the least invasive to current usage. This was done in response to the concerns heard. It would create a separation, minimizing crossings, etc, and along with the views within the park and the hilly topography they feel soft trail users would be hard pressed to even see the paved trail while using the park. He also discussed the feasibility study that will be done to provide for public input prior to establishing the final alignment.

Wulff discussed her tour of the park and the proposed alignment and her inability to see other soft trails. She felt it did a good job of separating the uses and experiences for the users. She discussed conversations that she has had with users of the equestrian trails and the lack of signage and that hikers are using the equestrian trails and often time 'spook' the horses. She would encourage more signage. She also feels it is reasonable to have a connector trail to connect the 7 elements of the park.

Kemery stated that he was a part of the Citizen's Panel, formed to review and comment on the draft master plan. Their consensus was to provide an experience for all people. He stated that there was more compromise than he had envisioned but the point is that this is a starting point. The impact of this trail is less than 1% of the entire park and will allow the wheelchair community to enjoy it. He noted that there are 40 miles, soon to be 43, of soft trails for population looking for a wilderness experience.

Gillespie stated that asphalt trails feel less safe to her and stated that there are bikes and there is more noise pollution. While she appreciates the comments in favor of a paved trail, she appreciates the quiet, natural experience of a soft trail for citizens wanting it without traveling outside the region.

Kopp stated he is not comfortable approving something that cannot be sold to its own neighbors. He asked if it was possible to table this item so that the groups can have some time to work out their differences. Youngquist again reviewed the role of this commission as an advisory body to the Council. She also reviewed the role of the Council as the decision making body.

Wulff added that for the Council to vote no, we would have to find something that violates Council policy. If they've met all of the criteria, we are obligated to approve this.

Chair Johnston opened the meeting for public comment. He noted comments would be limited to three minutes. He stated we are looking for comments on how the plan is not consistent or is consistent with Council policy.

Laura Hedlund feels there is something that is going extinct in the Twin Cities and it is life as God made it. She stated that 13% of us are taking anti-depression drugs. Pope Francis said we are not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass, metal, and deprived of physical contact of nature. Asphalt separates. Asphalt fragments space. The next generation will know things we do not know. We need to protect the fragments of intact land. She stated she respects totally and wants it to be used by all people but asphalt, multiple use trails competing with bikes does not offer you a wilderness experience. We can do better. She loves the idea of tabling this because Lebanon Hills have gifts to give. The reason is citizen participation. In a democracy, this matters and is not consistent with citizen participation. This also makes sense for a lot of other reasons. The 2040 Plan put an emphasis on reaching communities of color. Communities of color have tons of access to flat, asphalt surfaces. A lot of kids from communities of color live 8 years less. We have a lifespan difference. Nature heals.

Another reason it might make sense is they have the same consultant working since 2008. So the approach here has been based on greenway – no longer a greenway fill. She feels we can get community consensus and feels we need to – citizen participation counts.

Wayne Sames, Vice Chair of the Citizen's Panel stated he prefers soft trails and solitude. He is in favor of the master plan and the Panel's recommendations. He feels it is moving in the right direction. He discussed how this fosters long-term use and improving the recreational use. He noted that this is a regional park, not a park reserve and noted that the development being proposed is at a lesser level than would even be allowed in a park reserve. He is in favor of restoration and improvements to the land. In his opinion, this is not a wilderness it's a very nice and large open space area. He feels it has been severely desecrated from years of agricultural use and wood lot use, roads, power lines, etc. He can appreciate what people are saying when they talk about the feeling they get when they are out on the trails however he feels the experience will not change. He discussed his experience hiking on all of the unpaved trails and noted he will not even be able to see the paved trails proposed. He noted that it is the 25th Anniversary of the American's with Disabilities Act. There are major problems with lack of access in this park and we need to do a better job not just from a legal standpoint but from a moral standpoint. This plan, at least, offers a start to do a better job in that area.

Mike Fedde, Eagan stated he is here today because you've got 1.5% support so feels that this has never basically had any support. He feels what will be done is taking the topography of Fargo and dropping in on a hilly surface and paving it. He discussed what was done at Spring Lake Park. He stated that when that plan was presented to the Commission it was stated the cost would be \$1 million when it was actually \$13 million. They are mining and blasting a million year old dry bluff prairie and limestone. They're selling that limestone to road companies. There was condemnation from unwilling sellers and this major wreckage occurred. The right of way is cut through large hills resulting in berms – 200 feet wide. The most accurate description of this is Hwy 61 look-a-like. He stated Lebanon Hills has the same topography. He stated one of the sections does eliminate existing trails. He discussed the cost estimates of \$3 million and feels it will cost more like \$18 million. He feels there will be thousands of trees wiped out. He feels this is an appalling use of Legacy funds for environmental destruction. The voters did not vote for something like this. He feels it redundant of bikeways everywhere almost completely surrounding this park. He stated he doesn't feel this plan is accountable to the citizens. He doesn't want to see Fargo transplanted in the hills. He doesn't see any value for the investment into the trail.

Bill White stated he uses the park year round (since 1980) and has walked every trail. He stated it will take all the discipline he has not to say what he really thinks of this plan, our County Commissioners, and our park bureaucrats who basically told us to "shut up and sit in the corner, we know better than you do – this is our park, not yours." He stated we use the park and we know better than they do. He stated that he feels it is a wilderness area. He stated he talks to people all the time from all over the region and asked why they come to Lebanon Hills and they tell him it's because they can't find anything like this in the areas that they live in. He stated this is the Boundary Waters of southern MN. He talked about canoeing from one end of the park to the other. He described it as a series of rolling hills with trees, ponds, wet lakes, open areas, etc. He discussed all the wildlife he has seen and noted this will all be disrupted when they put a 'road' through. He feels 6 mile long, 8 feet wide is a road, not a trail. He feels the County Commissioners should have learned from what they did at Spring Lake Park. He stated it's a travesty and that they should be charged criminally for what they did at that park. He feels this is the only place people can go in the metropolitan area that has a true wilderness experience. He stated he sees diversity in the park all the time including Hmong. He stated there are all kinds of people using the park and it doesn't need to be paved for people to use the park. He stated it is a series of rolling hills and they say in the park plan that there can't be more than a 5% increase or decrease in the land. He asked how many hills will have to be bulldozed down and how many ditches and low areas will be filled in or bridged to pave a trail. He asked what this will do to the environment. It will be changed forever and will not come back again. He feels there are many areas in the park that are handicapped accessible and with a little bit of work – not a pavement - they could be made more accessible. He feels

there are parts of the park now that are not being taken care of including buildings and bridges that are falling down. He sees people with strollers in the park all the time and they don't want it paved. He stated they tell him they come for their kids to play on dirt, not on pavement. He stated that this is the last true wilderness area in this area – let's keep it that way. We can make some upgrades for handicapped (some areas where they are planning to put pavement, i.e., the one mile around McDonough Lake, or picnic areas) but a paved road through this park is the last thing that we need. He said that when he was told as a citizen to sit in the corner and shut up, he has a problem with that and is really ticked off with it. County Commissioners won't listen, park bureaucrats won't list, and he asked that this commission please listen.

Ken Walsh stated that there have been a lot of animated speakers talking about nature, wilderness, etc. which he pointed out you can visit throughout the state of Minnesota. He stated there are opportunities for exploring on soft trails or no trails. He noted that these opportunities don't exist for people in wheelchairs. We need to create some hard surfaces and this is what a park is for. Lebanon Hills Park is not the wilderness – it's farmland that has gone feral. He stated that for all of those that like the soft trail experience, there is 43 miles of soft trails. For those individuals who can't, although there was supposed to be 8 miles, there will now be 6.5 miles of paved trails. Those that want to keep only soft trails seem to want to keep everyone out except for themselves. It's public use for all. As for those stated that their voices weren't heard – they did do a lot of public meetings and sometimes the answer is no – they just don't like that answer.

Mike Stinson, Apple Valley resident stated he is a heavy user of the park. He is not keen on asphalt in the park. Although he respects the previous gentleman's comments, he feels we can adapt to something else. In the United States, let alone Dakota County, there's a real land ethic and he feels we should be maintaining the park – getting rid of buckthorn, maintaining bridges, etc. He feels we need to take care of what is there before we put in asphalt that has to be maintained. He stated that in the dead of winter he's feels like he is the only one there. He stated that he has not seen a handicapped person in a wheelchair on any of the asphalt trails that are around (the outside) of the park. He feels the Legacy Funds should not be considered. When this was passed (voted on) in 2008 he didn't think it was to build asphalt trails with those dollars. He feels we can adapt to those who are disabled, he is simply not in favor of asphalt. He discussed a trail that the US Government wants to build from Duluth to Dallas, a gigantic pathway so we can have butterflies and bees. The Governor of the state wants us to build 50 foot grass strips around every single stream, river and lake in this state and he agrees with that. He doesn't feel we need an asphalt trail in Lebanon Hills.

Scott Johnson, Eagan resident stated he is a daily park user. He stated you asked us to tell why this violates the spirit of the law. Dakota County has 10%, growing to 30%, immigrant population. He stated that all he saw on the Citizens Involvement Committee were old Norwegians, like himself. He did not see any people of color, any first generation Hispanics, or Hmong. He stated that when he goes to the park, the ones that he does see out there are not on the paved trails. They're in the woods with their kids learning about North American wilderness. They don't want to see a paved trail. He stated he never sees them using it. So, if you're looking for the reason this plan fails to meet the law, he said there it is right there – Dakota County failed to involve citizens of color and immigrants in their study. Next Johnson discussed jury nullification. He asked if committee members had ever seen an issue when in one month's time 690 people wrote a letter, a unique individual letter, to the County Board. He noted that 670 were opposed and 20 were in favor = 97% in agreement that the asphalt trail should not be built. He feels this is a farce. He feels that Dakota County has failed us in the past two decades in terms of maintenance. If you've ever walked on these trails, they are rutted, dangerous, and filled with buckthorn. He asked that the Council not give them any money to build new stuff until they take care of what they already have. Johnson noted \$8 million for maintenance or \$27 million for building new – it's a simple answer. He feels they absolutely don't deserve the money.

Stephen Thell stated he is hurt that with this being the 25th anniversary of American's with Disabilities Act we're still faced with ignorance, prejudice, and segregation. He asked folks to think about that. He

stated that the American's with Disabilities Act is the law of the land. It doesn't matter if it's a park, a path, a building, or a parking lot – it has to be up to code. It must be adaptable. He stated that there is always the next step too – to contact the Department of Justice. He stated this is not what they want to do. He asked the committee to do the right thing.

Holly Jenkins, Wilderness in the City, stated she represents a large group that is concerned with this plan. They cannot understand how a plan without public support can proceed. She stated that there is precedence – this can be sent back. It happened in 1999 – the last time the County tried to present a development plan that was unpopular. She stated that many hundreds of citizens have submitted comments to the Dakota County Board. Similar to the comments received here by this commission, these were individual messages. They were not form letters. They were not only from Dakota County residents; they were from all over the metro. They were not only from able bodied; they were from disabled bicyclists, elderly, young, and old. She noted that visitation to the county's parks grew by 61% while visitation to Lebanon Hills has grown by 100% in the last 10 years. She stated that 'it's' working and that people love what Lebanon Hills offers. She stated that the #1 reason people don't come to the park, according to the Dakota County's park system survey, is because they don't know where the parks are. It's not because they are looking for more recreational opportunities. She discussed criteria in the RPPP includes citizen participation. To meet this criteria, Dakota County solicited feedback from the public through a number of methods. She noted that consistently and overwhelmingly the public has responded they do not support the County's plan – in particular the paved trail constructed, end to end, through Lebanon Hills. Jenkins also stated that it does connect to the other greenways at this point. She stated there have been no changes on those alignments. She noted that the Commission doesn't have to take her word for it the Star Tribune reported 97% of the 670 comments received were opposed to the plan. At the Dakota County Board meeting, Commissioner Schouweiler stated "I cannot believe that out of 650 some comments, only 22 were in favor of this plan – what happened to representative Government". At that same meeting, Commissioner Egan noted that there is no passion for the paved trail at all. Jenkins noted however that the controversial plan was adopted, including the paved end to end trail. She stated that Dakota County has hundreds of existing bikeways. There are 200 additional miles of paved greenway trails planned. She stated that no one will be lacking for paved trail opportunities. What will be lost are the unique nature based recreation and education opportunities which are hard to find in urban settings. Instead of being a destination, Lebanon Hills will become a park like so many we already have. She further stated that Dakota County did solicit feedback from the public but that feedback was disregarded and they moved their agenda along. She stated that if 'citizen participation' is just a box to be checked off, then yes, recommend approving this plan. She stated that she hoped this group feels that citizen participation should be meaningful. If you believe citizen participation should be meaningful then she asked that this plan be sent back to Dakota County. Going forward, decisions about the future of Lebanon Hills should be made with citizens, not for citizens. With meaningful citizen involvement a master plan update can improve accessibility, it can increase visitors, and it can also have broad public support.

Kathy Klonecky stated that she wrote a letter but wanted to discussed minorities or different group of people/nationalities. She wanted to mention that her daughter (in college) met new students who like to hike and they go to Lebanon Hills. She stated that all of her friends are Japanese, Hmong, Chinese, and other nationalities that are Asian. She noted that they use Lebanon Hills frequently for hiking and they take her dogs and they enjoy it very much. She stated that they use it in the winter for hiking with the dogs. She asked these friends to review this plan and noted one of them stated the plan was blurry, referencing the maps. Klonecky stated she felt the maps were blurry as well and stated that if 'normal' people can't read how we can expect people with disabilities to read them. She asked the Japanese girl what she thought about the 6 mile trail, because that is what most people are against. She reported that this girl stated she didn't think they should touch anything, she feels it should be left as it is. Klonecky stated she thinks these Asian people have a different philosophy than what we people think they should be having. Her daughters group of friends like the park the way it is. She added that she has been looking up the American's with Disabilities Act and the guidelines updated on June 8, 2015 clearly state

that they are flexible, quote “a key concept is that not all facilities must necessarily be made accessible. If an activity is accessible to and usable by people with disabilities the public entity can accept an alternate existing location as compliant.” She also mentioned that she has several elderly friends with many different kinds of handicaps and she doesn’t believe you could get one of them to go out in any park at all. She pointed out that Commissioners have commented ‘where are all the people’ and she feels that a lot of them aren’t going to go there anyway and a lot of disabled people aren’t because the trail is too long. If they had an emergency there, where would they go – 6 miles that just goes straight on is really dangerous. Anything could happen. She stated she couldn’t get her friends to go on this, even if she was with them. They just wouldn’t go.

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

1. Approve the Lebanon Hills Regional Park Master Plan.
2. Require Dakota County to submit information regarding the location and estimated costs for the relocation and development of Camp Sacajawea and the maintenance facility to the Metropolitan Council for approval prior to seeking regional parks funding for these projects.

Weber commented that he has read the plan, all the comments, and visited the park. He feels the citizen participation for this plan was extensive, open and meaningful. He feels they went above the call of duty for this plan. He really likes the restoration plan for the park. It is obviously very much needed and it is the centerpiece of the master plan. He feels that overall the design is consistent with our RPPP, is consistent with the description in the 2030 and 2040 RPPPs for what the role of a regional park is. He noted that this is not a regional park reserve, it is a regional park. He also reminded the Commission of the role of this Commission as stated by the Chair and staff. We are not in the same shoes as Dakota County. They are a partner with us. We administer the policy plan; they do the detailed design work. We decide whether their design is consistent with our policies. Weber stated that the word ‘wilderness’ has been used a lot in the comments – both written and verbal. He feels this area ceased being a ‘wilderness’ about 150 years ago. He noted it is not wilderness, it is a nice natural area, but it is not wilderness. He feels the trail is a reasonable addition and it’s not going to destroy the natural atmosphere. It’s certainly not going to have the negative environmental ecological impacts that have been claimed. It’s separate from the 43 miles of soft trails. In fact, he stated, if you want to talk about environmental impacts of trails, the horse system and the mountain bike system have a lot more negative impact than this 6 mile asphalt, 8 foot wide trail will. He stated he hasn’t heard of anybody asking for those systems to be removed and that is where the impact comes from in terms of trails in this park. He feels the master plan is consistent with the RPPP and he feels it is not the role of this Commission to second guess the opinion of the County Board or to micromanage the design. If the locals want to have further input into the design of the trail, they should work through the proposed feasibility design development study to work on the layout and alignment relative to topography and natural resources. As Council Member Wulff said, unless the master plan is obviously and dramatically inconsistent with the regional plan, we must approve it.

Moeller stated he is sympathetic to our speakers and their passion about the wilderness at the same time he is well aware of what our responsibilities are in terms of this body and what we have to choose from. He is conscious of the ADA requirements and how the proposal deals with that. He is struck by the fact that Dakota County has taken years now to go through public comments and listen to the various input and still come down with this recommendation. From his standpoint, he sees no reason not to approve the master plan as proposed based on the work that has gone on. If there is some further decision by Dakota County and its residents to make it even better, he would applaud that but in terms of the choice we have to make he supports the master plan.

Kemery agrees with comments of Weber and Moeller.

Taylor appreciates all the comments. He is interested in the possibility of staying engaged in the process because although it feels unpopular, the Board made a decision. In terms of public policy he has worked historically on public policy. He discussed one of the most unpopular decision made in 1880 to not allow public development of land along our waterways. He noted this was a really big deal however overtime has proven itself valuable. He stated he also feels the negative impacts anticipated on Lebanon Hills by this trail may be lessened over time. As a user of Lebanon Hills, he would like to stay involved going forward.

Weber stated that the foundation for a lot of what we do for the regional parks system goes back to the 1950's has been environmentally based – preserving, conserving, resorting the best of our natural resources whether they be land, water, scenery, etc., at the same time reasonably meeting the outdoor recreation needs of the population. The role of the regional park system is to do both of these things together, not one exclusive of the other. He thinks that over time we balance these things and feels that this is another example of finding the balance between natural preservation/restoration and meeting outdoor recreation needs. He feels most of the emphasis in this plan is on restoration of the natural resources, re-growing the original native forest, removing buckthorn, etc., yet providing access to not only people in wheelchairs but to the rest of us who wouldn't mind walking on a paved trail. The paved trail is not just for those in wheelchairs, it's for the entire population – we all benefit. To Weber, this does not come down to an ADA issue it comes down to a reasonable balance between natural resources and recreation. Throughout our parks system in the seven county metro area, we have paved trails in our regional parks. He stated that this trails is a pretty small percentage of the park and is going through an area that has been degraded and will be restored. It's for the most part separate both physically and visually from the existing soft trails. He feels this is a reasonable compromise. He has read the description in the regional policy plan of what a regional park should be and it talks about the balance of natural resources and recreation. He feels this is a reasonable balance and generally speaking it is not inconsistent with the policies in our plan. He feels the County Board has an obligation to do this trail well and references what happened at Spring Lake Park and encouraged people to participate in the process going forward.

Hietpas feels this body is charged with approving this trail based on the RPPP, regardless of her own personal feelings. She encouraged the public to stay engaged with the implementing agency so that it can be done correctly.

Chair Johnston stated that his personal observation is that this park is intended to serve the population 25 years from now. There are probably going to be some differences in the population 25 years from now. His assessment is that Dakota County has taken that into consideration in making this plan. He stated that he has been in the minority position many times in his ten-years of public service and he understands the passion and intensity with which those beliefs are held. Unfortunately they are almost never unanimous. He feels we need to use our judgment to do what we think is best for the long term future of the parks in our region and still be compassionate about the people who don't agree.

Chair Johnston called for a vote. **The motion carried 8:1.**

INFORMATION

None.

REPORTS

Chair: None

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Youngquist discussed moving the September 1 meeting to September 8 due to the public hearing record for the 2016-2021 CIP. This would allow for public comments to be received.

Moeller moved and Hietpas seconded staff's recommendation to reschedule the meeting to September 8, 2015. Several members noted that they will not be able to attend. It was determined that there would still be a quorum.

Chair Johnston called for a vote. **Motion carried.**

ADJOURNMENT

7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary