

## Minutes of the

### METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Thursday, September 5, 2019

**Committee Members Present:** Margie Andreason, Cecily Harris, Todd Kemery, Jeremy Peichel, Anthony Taylor, Rick Theisen, Tony Yarusso, and Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, liaison to the Council

**Committee Members Absent:** Catherine Fleming, Bob Moeller

#### CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Tony Yarusso called the meeting of the Council's Special Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:40 p.m. on Thursday, September 5, 2019.

#### APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the September 5, 2019 agenda. It was motioned by Peichel and seconded by Andreason to approve the agenda. **The agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 1, 2019 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. It was motioned by Theisen and seconded by Kemery. **The minutes were approved.**

#### PUBLIC INVITATION

None.

#### BUSINESS

**2019-226, Grand Rounds Missing Link Regional Trail Master Plan, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board** – Planning Analyst Colin Kelly

Kemery motioned, and it was seconded by Harris to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Grand Rounds Missing Link Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Require that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, prior to initiating development of the regional trail, send preliminary plans to the Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Division.

#### **Motion carried.**

Kelly presented the regional trail master plan the Grand Rounds Missing Link Regional Trail Master Plan as outlined in the materials provided.

Carrie Christensen from Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) was also in attendance and responded to questions.

Commissioner Taylor asked whether the trailhead sites along the route would offer non-bicycling amenities. Christensen responded that MPRB is working closely with community members to explore options including dog park space, a community garden, and activating Trillium Park. Taylor also asked how the trail will serve other communities like Saint Anthony and other Minneapolis neighborhoods. Christensen responded that completion of the trail will knit together the neighborhoods along the trail.

Chair Yarusso asked about the routing of the trail on the north end. Christensen responded that St. Anthony has requested the trail be kept on-street between Kenzie Terrace and Stinson Parkway.

Commissioner Kemery asked about the provision of restroom facilities along the planned trail corridor. Christensen responded that restroom facilities would be shared with Gross Golf Course on the northern end and likely incorporated into the Towerside District trailhead on the southern end.

Commissioner Harris asked what percentage of Grand Rounds trail users are pedestrians? Christensen said she would have to get back to the Commissioner. Harris also asked if there was any consideration of a non-paved trail surface for the planned trail. Christensen responded that the Missing Link exists in a different context than much of the rest of the Grand Rounds where there is more right-of-way available for both paved and natural treadways. Right-of-way is constrained in the Missing Link area.

Council Member Atlas-Ingebretson asked whether there are any other trail segments on-street in the Grand Rounds and if there were any other options for the trail in St. Anthony. Christensen responded that there are not on-street segments on other portions of the Grand Rounds and that MPRB will continue to work with St. Anthony on the specific siting of the trail. Atlas-Ingebretson also asked where there were areas of concentrated poverty near the trail corridor. Christensen said the Bottineau and Holland neighborhoods were likely the closest, though she mentioned Glendale Townhomes at the southern end of the trail corridor, which provides public housing. Atlas-Ingebretson also asked about the number of rail intersections and the timing of trail implementation. Christensen said that biggest challenge would likely be the crossing of the railyard from Towerside to Kasota, but that some trail segments could be built within the next five years.

### **2019-227, Rush Creek Regional Trail Acquisition Master Plan Amendment and Facility Exchange, Three Rivers Park District – Planner Tracey Kinney**

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

1. Approve the Rush Creek Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Approve the release of the restrictive covenant on 2.3-acres of land within Rush Creek Regional Trail as shown in Figure 5 in exchange for the investment of \$30,000 (the appraised value of the property) toward the development of the Rush Creek Regional Trail grade-separated crossing at Winnetka Avenue.
3. Inform Three Rivers Park District that \$30,000 toward the development of the Rush Creek Regional Trail grade-separated crossing at Winnetka Avenue are not grant eligible expenses.
4. Advise Three Rivers Park District to coordinate with Metropolitan Council Environmental Services on the location and construction of the proposed roadway that is on or near Metropolitan Council property prior to initiating this project.

#### **Motion carried.**

Kinney presented the regional trail master plan the Rush Creek Regional Trail Acquisition Master Plan and Facility Exchange as outlined in the materials provided.

Ann Rexine, Principal Planner from Three Rivers Park District, and Jesse Stuve, City Engineer from the City of Brooklyn Park, were also in attendance and responded to questions.

Commissioner Jeremy Peichel asked whether the loss of wetlands in the trail corridor will increase the potential for flooding. Jesse Struve responded that the road expansion will not result in additional water on this site. A number of stormwater best management practices will be implemented to improve the water management on this site.

Commissioner Cecily Harris requested more information on the Northern Long Eared Bat protection. Jesse Struve responded that federal guidelines for habitat protection will be followed, including removing a minimal number of trees.

Chair Yarusso requested information on how the facility credit will be tracked internally. Tracey Kinney responded that the credit is tracked in the business item and in the 2019 executed purchase agreement between Three Rivers Park District and the City of Brooklyn Park.

**2019-228, Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Acquisition Master Plan and Boundary Adjustment, Scott County – Planner Tracey Kinney**

Peichel motioned, and it was seconded by Kemery to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Scott County's Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Acquisition Master Plan Amendment.
2. Approve the boundary adjustment adding 7-acres of high-quality, natural resource land along the Minnesota River in Blakeley Township.
3. Inform Scott County that it must submit the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve Development Master Plan for Metropolitan Council approval prior to requesting funding for development.

**Motion carried.**

Kinney presented the park reserve acquisition master plan for the Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve as outlined in the materials provided.

There were no questions or comments.

**2019-229, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve (O'Reilly), Scott County – Grants Administrator Jessica Lee**

Harris motioned, and it was seconded by Taylor to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$555,263.25 to Scott County to acquire the 37.45-acre O'Reilly parcel located at 25975 Chatfield Drive, Blakeley Township, for Blakeley Bluffs Park Reserve.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.
3. Consider reimbursing Scott County for up to \$185,087.75 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Bonding Program for costs associated with their local match.
4. Inform Scott County 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.

**Motion carried.**

Chair Yarusso noted that there was a conservation easement on the property and asked if it was reflected in the appraised value. Ms. Lee confirmed that it was. There were no other questions or comments.

**INFORMATION**

1. Regional Parks System 2020 Bonding Program – Project and Equity Highlights (Emmett Mullin and Regional Park Implementing Agency Partners) [Click here to view Bonding Request PowerPoint presentation](#)

The purpose of this information item was to provide background and support discussion for the 2020 Regional Parks System Bonding Program. The total proposed Bonding Program is \$25 million, which

includes a \$15 million Council request to the Governor for inclusion in the 2020 Legislative Session. If passed, the Council's match commitment at this level would be \$10 million. The ten Regional Park Implementing Agencies presented project and equity highlights from this program request.

**Equity Toolkit.** The Bonding Program under consideration includes a commitment from the Council to work with the ten agencies to understand and document how projects advance equitable use of the Regional Parks System. Each agency identified whether their bonding requests help advance equitable usage of the Regional Parks System. In some instances, the agencies highlighted the project's equity component, while in other instances, the agencies indicate that the project was not designed to advance equitable use. The purpose of this exercise is to help foster a system-wide discussion on how we are collectively advancing equitable use in the Regional Parks System, including exploring effective ways to build equity components into capital projects.

Park implementing staff highlighted their efforts in advancing equitable use of the Regional Park System:

**Anoka County** – Karen Blaska - partnerships, engagement to create awareness, removing barriers to use; pedestrian tunnel, pedestrian bridge, programs.

**Washington County** – Sandy Breuer - Community Engagement/Equity Toolkit learnings and innovations, announcements in 3 languages at Lake Elmo Park Reserve.

**Three Rivers Park District** – Johnathan Vlaming – protecting natural resources, engaging new visitors, sharing lessons learned; proximity is important, developing bridging facilities for programming.

**Scott County** – Patty Freeman - 3 priorities; protect habitat and natural spaces for people, expanding regional recreation opportunity, and striving for equity

**St Paul Parks & Recreation** – Paul Sawyer –serving a diverse community; *Income:* 1170 individuals participating in 2018 Equity Matters Programming, *Age/Ability:* 38,820 free summer meals served, *Race:* First-time camping programs in regional parks, *Ability:* Sensory-Friendly Mornings at Como Zoo and Conservatory, *National Origin:* Foot washing stations in park restrooms and Sepak takraw and tuj lub courts in parks, *Gender Identity:* Inclusive restroom policy

**Ramsey County** – Chris Lencowski– 21<sup>st</sup> Century Park vision – Take a Residents First approach; engage in authentic and constructive community dialogue with underrepresented communities, be nimble and responsive, advance racial and health equity and ensure excellence in all that we provide.

**Minneapolis Parks & Recreation** – Carrie Christensen - areas of Minneapolis that lack access to water-based recreation are the same areas that have lower incomes and higher non-white and/or foreign-born populations, MPRB is prioritizing regional park investments in parks in these areas: Mississippi Gorge, Above the Falls, and the Missing Link, the “incompleteness” of Minneapolis’s system is the critical equity consideration, when considering race and income/wealth, and recent community engagement has led to new park designs.

**Dakota County** – Jeff Bransford – increasing service to the underserved; higher than expected interest in programs and events, increase in events (5 to 14), increase in school programs (2,600 more students), Master Plan update 2019-2020 included potential to better serve all populations, especially: Rural , Mobility Impaired, Youth/Seniors, Limited Transportation, Native/Indigenous

**Carver County** – Marty Walsh – Carver County’s population has the highest percentage of youth ages 5-18 years old in the region: collaborative partnerships, affordable, attractive outdoor recreation programming, and eliminating park entrance fee in 12/2019.

**Bloomington** – Renae Clark – serving an evolving population including a diverse range of age, ethnicity, race, ability and income, has hired Community Outreach Coordinator specific to parks, as well

as recently structured a Community Outreach division for the City, and a primary focus on lower income families and non-white communities

## REPORTS

**Chair:** Yarusso – Working on identifying members to serve on the equity grant review committee – 3 members from MPOSC, 2 members from outside equity experts.

**Commissioners:** Kemery – Continuing his efforts to meet regularly with Dakota & Scott Counties.

**Staff:** Mullin – 3 updates: Council received 15 application for \$1.2M for the equity grant program; 2021 FY Legacy applications approved; October 3 MPOSC meeting will be in Scott County at Cleary Lake Regional Park.

## ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Michele Wenner  
Recording Secretary