

Minutes of the

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, July 9, 2019

Committee Members Present:

Rick Theisen, Tony Yarusso, Jeremy Peichel, Catherine Fleming, Cecily Harris, Anthony Taylor, Margie Andreason and Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, liaison to the Council

Committee Members Absent:

Bob Moeller, Todd Kemery

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 3:32 p.m. on Tuesday, July 9, 2019.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the July 9, 2019 Agenda. It was motioned by Harris and seconded by Andreason to approve the agenda. The **agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 6, 2019 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. It was motioned by Peichel and seconded by Harris. The **minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

None.

BUSINESS

2019-170, CP Rail Regional Trail Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District – Tracey Kinney, Planner

Kinney gave a presentation on a Master Plan for the Canadian Pacific Regional Trail Master Plan Segment A as outlined in the materials provided.

Taylor asked if there is a breakdown of the engagement that was done. Stephen Shurson, Landscape Architect Three Rivers Park District stated there is a breakdown of questions asked and responses included in the appendix. He discussed the different options and responses received. Noted there is also a chart that shows some of the engagement done. He felt the results were 50:50 between A&B and that is why option C was developed as it addresses both sides.

Taylor asked if there are traffic counts of commuters and discussed trail dead-ending now. Shurson stated having a north/south connector is an added benefit.

Taylor asked about further outreach to connect more people and increase awareness at programming level. Kelly Grissman, Planning Director Three Rivers Park District stated they are doing a lot to bring awareness and doing a bike rodeo and will continue to do so. They are also working with local communities as well.

Fleming asked if their responses differed from similar needs – looking for safe biking experiences.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked how many were surveyed. Shurson stated there were 210 online surveys, 110 wiki maps, and many door to door surveys done, however he did not have a exact count but felt they were very thorough.

Andreason noted that this plan is very exciting and appreciated the work done.

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

1. Approve the CP Rail Regional Trail Master Plan for Segment A.
2. Notify Three Rivers Park District that a Council approved master plan for the CP Rail Regional Trail Search Corridor Segments B-F is required prior to future funding requests.
3. Require that Three Rivers Park District, prior to initiating development of the regional trail, send preliminary plans to the Engineering Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division, for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the regional interceptor system.

Chair Yarusso noted that it is interesting that we have to look at trail plans in smaller segments and it's difficult when thinking about the bigger picture. He added that this may be something to think about in our next policy discussion.

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

2019-156, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Big Marine Park Reserve (Nelson), Washington County - Jessica Lee, Senior Grants Administrator

Lee gave a presentation on a park acquisition opportunity fund grant request for Big Marine Park Reserve as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked why some of the funds are not coming from Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. Mullin stated that with the new calendar year we now have Parks and Trails Legacy Funds available.

Harris commented that this is a spectacular property.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$813,048.22 to Washington County to acquire the 75.4-acre Nelson property located at 12096 170th Street in the City of Marine on St. Croix for Big Marine Park Reserve, contingent on Council approval of the 2019 Quarter 2 Unified Budget Amendment, Business Item 2019-166 JT; and
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Taylor asked if there is still other property to be acquired. Sandy Breuer, Parks Director Washington County stated that the County will now own approximately 40% of the land within the park boundary.

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

2019-168, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Crow-Hassan Park Reserve, (Guzek), Three Rivers Park District - Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst

Kelly gave a presentation on a Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant request for Crow-Hassan Park Reserve outlined in the materials provided.

Andreason asked about the decision to demo the house versus trying to utilize it. Kelly noted that the structure is 'dated' (built in 1963) and would require costly upgrades. Grissman stated that this is always considered and noted that it would be expensive to retrofit the home to fit 'a need' that doesn't exist. Chair Yarusso asked if it could be used as a trailhead? Grissman explained that a trailhead is already planned for less than a mile from this location, so it is not needed.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$255,266.25 to Three Rivers Park District to acquire the 1.02-acre Guzek parcel located at 27060 Sylvan Lake Road in the City of Rogers for Crow-Hassan Park

Reserve, contingent on Council approval of the 2019 Quarter 2 Unified Budget Amendment, Business Item 2019-166 JT;

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 \$85,088.75 from its share of a future Regional Parks Bonding Program for costs associated with this purchase; and
4. Inform Three Rivers Park District 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.

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

2019-157, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for the River to River Greenway Regional Trail (Blockbuster) Dakota County - Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst

Kelly gave a presentation on a Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant request for the River to River Greenway Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked if all metro transit buses have bike racks. Kelly stated he believes so.

Taylor asked if the estimate for the tunnel is \$2.2 million. Al Singer, Dakota County Parks stated that \$2.2 million is part of the bond proceeds already awarded to the City and noted that the design and engineering is already underway and he's not sure what the total cost will be.

Taylor stated that this is a critical tunnel for safe connections.

Atlas-Ingebretson thanked staff for including transportation information in the report.

Peichel asked if this is the first piece to be acquired. Singer noted that the City took possession of Auto Zone and they are working with the City. He added that they have all the parcels to the east and are working on three small parcels to the west.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$427,597.50 to Dakota County to acquire a 0.55-acre easement across the Blockbuster property located at 1539 Robert Street South in the City of West St. Paul for the River to River Greenway Regional Trail, contingent on Council approval of the 2019 Quarter 2 Unified Budget Amendment, Business Item 2019-166 JT;
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council;
3. Consider reimbursing Dakota County for up to \$142,532.50 from its share of a future Regional Parks Bonding Program; and
4. Inform Dakota County that if the County fails to complete the needed land assemblage by December 31, 2022, then:
 - a. Dakota County agrees to reimburse the Council for the costs of this property
 - b. The future reimbursement consideration for this acquisition is nullified; and
5. Inform Dakota 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.

Chair Yarusso asked about the 4th recommendation and if this needs to be legally defined. Mullin stated that there are a number of parcels that need to line up in order for the project to happen. He noted that

it needs to be a functioning trail. Barajas added that the language used reflects what is in the agreement.

Peichel asked if the completion date (12/31/22) is due to a Federal grant deadline. Mullin stated that the grant was extended. Singer stated this is when the bond funds extinguish.

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

2019-169, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail (New City Covenant Church) Three Rivers Park District - Tracey Kinney, Planner

Kinney gave a presentation on a Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant request for Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked about the condemnation practice. Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District stated it is only used as a last resort. He noted that they had been in negotiations with the church and an attorney contacted the church and stated he could get them a better deal. He stated that no one wants to utilize condemnation. They had a grant that would expire without it.

Chair Yarusso noted that the opposition refers to the funding for the acquisition that was already done.

Taylor asked how close the appraisal was. Vlaming stated theirs was \$280,000 and the church's was over \$900,000 so they split the difference.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$509,869.50 to Three Rivers Park District to acquire the 26,636 square-foot easement from the New City Covenant Church located at 6400 Tracy Avenue in the City of Edina for Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail, contingent on Council approval of the 2019 Quarter 2 Unified Budget Amendment, Business Item 2019-166 JT; and;
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 \$169,956.50 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Bonding Program; and
4. Inform Three Rivers Park District 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.

Andreason asked do we consider negative feelings? Vlaming stated a big part takes place in the planning process. He didn't see any public backlash and stated that the trail is much loved and well used.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. Five were in favor, one abstention, and one opposed. **The motion carried.**

2019-158, Annual Metropolitan Regional Parks Operation and Maintenance Report - Abdiwahab Ali, Finance Analyst

Ali gave a presentation on the Annual Metropolitan Regional Parks Operation and Maintenance Report as outlined in the materials provided. Mullin provided an updated Table 1, not included in the materials.

Andreason motioned and it was seconded by Harris to recommend that Metropolitan Council accept the Regional Parks System state fiscal year 2020 operation and maintenance report, as shown in Table 1.

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

2019-159, Future Reimbursement Consideration for Carver County - Emmett Mullin, Regional Parks Manager

Mullin gave a presentation on a request from Carver County for a future reimbursement consideration as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked how it became registered as a national registry of historical sites. Marty Walsh, Carver County Parks stated it was due to all of its past uses and noted there were also Native American artifacts found.

Chair Yarusso asked if historic preservation will be eligible for bond usage. Mullin stated it will.

Atlas-Ingebretson discussed tribal relations policies that have recently been initiated through the Governor's office. She asked if there is anything we need to be thinking about in this regard. Barajas discussed the Governor's Executive Order and stated it does include the Metropolitan Council, however she is not sure how it extends to our partners. She stated policies are being developed at this time.

Taylor asked how this impacts the state of historic preservation. Barajas stated she will take another look at this.

Walsh stated that Carver County Implementing Agency does have to follow State historic guidelines and they do follow the Executive Order.

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

1. Consider reimbursing Carver County up to \$400,000 from its share of a future Regional Parks Bonding Program for costs it incurs for development of Coney Island, Lake Waconia Regional Park; and
2. Inform Carver County that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that it will reimburse the County and that expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement

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

INFORMATION

2018 Regional Park System Annual Use Estimate - Darcie Vandegrift, Principal Researcher

Vandegrift gave a presentation on the 2018 Regional Park System Annual Use Estimates outlined in the materials provided.

Taylor asked about changes in the seasonal multiplier. Mullin stated it's the same multiplier for all parks.

Chair Yarusso discussed doing actual winter counts to be more accurate. Vandegrift discussed streetlight data ap that will give us a more robust accurate number.

The group discussed current process for counts and how data can be improved.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked has MPOSC had any presentation on the street light ap data? Mullin stated this is a technology that is improving and staff could bring a presentation back to this group.

Atlas-Ingebretson discussed addressing the need for accurate winter counts.

Fleming asked about data that shows who you are and why you are here. Chair Yarusso noted that the Visitor Survey gets more specific in these areas. He suggested another study that looks at folks not using our parks and why, similar to the one done by Raintry Salk a few years ago.

Harris asked if there is a study regarding the age of park users. Vandegrift stated this is something staff are looking into as we don't currently do that.

Atlas-Ingebretson discussed the senior audience as well as persons of color and certain age groups that have been engaged with the Legacy funds. She asked if we can ask the implementing agencies what data they have. Chair Yarusso cautioned that we can't use agency numbers in our formulas for allocation of dollars but may find the information interesting.

Youth and Parks – Proposed Research Project - Darcie Vandegrift, Principal Researcher, Joel Huting, Research Manager

Vandegrift gave a presentation on youth and parks – a proposed research project outlined in the materials provided.

Fleming discussed informal research they've done and most youth don't know the difference between a local or a regional park and what is allowed/not allowed in each. She suggested differentiating in the study.

Harris asked what the age of the youth being researched are. Vandegrift stated they are high school age.

Harris suggested engaging youth to volunteer in our parks. Chair Yarusso noted that volunteer may check off a requirement for scouts, etc.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked if an RFP is done. Vandegrift stated each focus group would be under \$5,000 so and RFP is not needed. She explained the process.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked what the total budget is. Vandegrift stated it's \$50,000 and discussed what would be included.

Atlas-Ingebretson discussed YPAR (youth participatory action research) group that she felt would be very robust and would like to see staff access them so this doesn't overlap efforts already being done. Taylor agreed. Atlas-Ingebretson stated not contacting them could be a missed opportunity.

Vandegrift stated the timeline is partly due to the weather changes and asked for contact information.

Atlas-Ingebretson stated there is literally a YPAR network. She also felt working with them when the weather changes is a good thing. She stated she will get more contact information.

Chair Yarusso also encouraged a project study in the winter.

Vandegrift explained the timelines and also the visitor study being done next year.

Atlas-Ingebretson stressed the timeline should not be an issue. Taylor agreed.

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso discussed Equity Distribution Review Committee appointments and noted there will be 3 from this group and 2 from outside public appointment by himself. He hoped to have names by mid-August and members appointed by Labor Day.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked if there is a description of what we're looking for. Staff will look into this.

Commissioners: Harris noted she was asked to serve on the Pine Point Citizen Advisory Committee.

Staff: Mullin noted that the application for the Equity Distribution Review Committee appointments was launched this morning.

Mullin stated park meeting/tours will be coming in September and October.

Mullin noted that Libby Starling, Deputy Division Director of Regional Planning is leaving the Council. Atlas-Ingebretson thanked her for her work.

ADJOURNMENT

With business completed, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary