

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: May 2, 2024

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

Chair, Tony Yarusso,
at large

Monica Dillenburg, District A

Robert Moeller, District B

Tess Bouska, District C

David Yakes, District D

Chris Suerig, District E

Cecily Harris, District F

Anthony Taylor, District G

Amanda Duerr, District H

Susan Vento, Council Liaison

= present, E = excused

Call to order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:02pm.

Agenda approved

Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. Agenda approved.

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Moeller, seconded by Yakes to approve the minutes of the April 4, 2024, regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

None.

Business

1. 2024-112: Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award (HCRRA), Carver County (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on the Lake Minnetonka Regional Trail, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award as outlined in the materials and presentation provided.

It was moved by Moeller, seconded by Yakes, that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$395,957 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Carver County to acquire approximately 40 acres of a former Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority trail corridor located in Victoria, MN, for the Lake Minnetonka LRT Regional Trail.
2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Chair Yarusso asked for an explanation of Stewardship costs. Marty Walsh, Carver County stated they are largely for the replacement of several culverts, as well as other corridor maintenance.

Motion carried.

Information

1. Draft 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Information Item

Kevin Phan, Tracey Kinney, Colin Kelly began the presentation with a high-level overview of Sections 1-6 of the 60% draft Regional Parks Policy Plan (RPPP) pausing for comments and questions from the Commission.

Moeller referred to Section 2, the Regional Parks and Trails System Plan, and he asked, as we talk about trails, what changes are we making regarding electric bikes? Are trails being used as transportation corridors? Kinney discussed that these topics were taken up by a Regional Trail Work Group which was beginning this month. She noted that we will discuss these topics more in the 90% draft of the RPPP.

Taylor discussed the proposal for a Cultural Landscape classification. He shared appreciation for the new narrative relative to American Indian and other cultural communities. He stated that this is a move in the right direction, with belonging and identity as important points to be introduced into the narrative.

Moeller referred to Section 4, Climate Resilience, and asked whether we are making any of these actions measurable. Mullin stated that this is a new area for the RPPP and stated we've recently added a couple climate researches to our Council staff team. We are getting active help from these folks, as we work to support implementing agencies in this work. We hope this results in more quantifiable actions and measures in the Policy document. Moeller emphasized that we should challenge ourselves with adding measurable outcomes.

Council Member Vento stated that there is a Council-wide initiative to reduce our carbon footprint. We can connect into this work.

Taylor asked if there is something we can ask agencies that is more tangible to tie to our region.

Vento suggested a competition between agencies to for instance reduce their energy footprint, like some cities are doing with water consumption.

Bouska suggested having statistics showing the impact of land preservation and natural space on climate action.

Chair Yarusso noted that there seems to be a pattern in the plan that describes policy work versus prescribes what is done and how. He also asked, do we need to highlight changes that we have not yet discussed and asked if we could have a list of these actions.

Chair Yarusso suggested having a page on the Council's website that gives descriptions and links to where information can be found about our climate work or other aspects of plan implementation.

Taylor discussed Section 4, Climate Resilience, Actions 5 and 6 and asked, is this an area we could add some form of measurement.

Chair Yarusso raised the concern about the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and whether it will get renewed on the November ballot.

Chair Yarusso asked about where the language for long range plan amendments will be found? Kelly noted it will be found in the Planning Handbook, which will be shared at the June MPOSC meeting.

Next Lovelee and Lee gave a presentation on Section 7, Recreation, Facilities, and Programming and Section 8, Finance, as outlined in the materials and presentation provided.

Vento discussed the issue of ensuring access to aging Minnesotans, which is one of the fastest growing groups in our region. How will the regional system be ready to provide access to this population?

Moeller asked about leveraging affinity groups in our engagement work. Lovelee shared that



this is an effective strategy that we're doing with a number of outdoor groups.

Chair Yarusso discussed trail design standards and asked should they be included and where? He stated that use of trails and issues of allowable funding, and asked if that topic needs to be a part of this policy plan.

Moeller discussed signage and wayfinding protocol and asked if there is a standard that we could build on in our long-range planning systemwide. Vento suggested this is a conversation to begin with the implementing agencies. The Commission discussed this idea of building awareness and better wayfinding, and discussed what the implementing agencies are already doing.

Yakes asked if an executive summary of shorter version of this document has been considered? Even a video? Barajas stated this is part of our Communications Plan, including an update to our website.

Walsh, Carver County Parks suggested that the definition of a regional park needs to be stronger to delineate regional parks from local parks, especially considering the legislative funding.

Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District stated it's all about getting people outdoors. He noted that the legislature is very clear about what they will and will not fund. He encouraged MPOSC to think less about the details of non-local visitors, as he thinks it's more important to focus on getting people outdoors and focus our efforts on expanding opportunities for all.

Taylor asked if any consideration has been given to funding inside the urban core versus outside? Lee stated they are working on this using GIS data to better track financial expenditures.

Chair Yarusso suggested making a note in the policy plan when something is statutorily required.

The Commission discussed the IRS rule change that no longer allows for future reimbursements, and how tough this change has been on smaller implementing agencies. Lee discussed future work plan looking at the match requirements and increasing funding caps.

Reports

1. Chair – Chair Yarusso stated he will check with Vento on Budgeting.
2. Committee Members – none.
3. Council Liaison – Vento reported on a Three Rivers Park District State of the Parks Expo that was a wonderful event. She encouraged implementing agencies to keep us posted on events like this.
4. Staff – Mullin went to a Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Meeting at Paradise Commons in Waconia. He stated that the new visitors center was stunning and encouraged folks to visit.

Mullin gave a brief report of the Legislature. Currently there is a proposal to provide \$8 million in state bonding for the regional system that would be matched by the Council with about \$5.5 million.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting of May 2, 2024.

Approved this 6th day of June 2024.

Council contact:

Sandi Dingle, Recording Secretary
Sandi.Dingle@metc.state.mn.us
651-602-1312

