

Minutes

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: November 6, 2023

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Steet

Members Present:

- Chair, Robert Lilligren, D7
- Vice Chair, Susan Vento, D11
- Judy Johnson, District 1
- Reva Chamblis, District 2

- Peter Lindstrom, District 10
- Chai Lee, District 13
- Toni Carter, District 14

- Tenzin Dolkar, District 15
- Wendy Wulff, District 16

Call to Order

A quorum being present, Chair Lilligren called the regular meeting of the Community Development Committee to order at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Wulff, seconded by Vento, to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2023, regular meeting of the Community Development Committee. **Motion carried.**

Consent

1. **2023-271** Adoption of Utility Allowance Schedule for Metro HRA Rent Assistance Programs (Terri Smith 651-602-1187)

It was moved by Vento, seconded by Lee that the Metropolitan Council approve the Utility Allowance Schedule for use in the Housing Choice Voucher and other rent assistance programs effective January 1, 2024.

Motion carried.

The Community Development Committee recommended approval of the proposed action without questions or discussion as part of its consent agenda.

Non-Consent Business

1. **2023-260 SW:** West Mississippi River Regional Trail Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund (Coutolenc), Three Rivers Park District (Jessica Lee 651-602-1621)

It was moved by Vento, seconded by Lee that the Metropolitan Council: Approve a grant of up to \$480,000 to Three Rivers Park District to acquire a 1.1-acre parcel located at 16590 Dayton River Road in Dayton, MN, for the West Mississippi River Regional Trail.

2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Motion carried.

Council Member Wendy Wulff asked about acquiring land for this trail in fee title rather than easement, and why that was decided, and requested more details about future plans for the trail corridor, suggesting that if Three Rivers planned to acquire enough land for a linear park that they

update their long-term plan. Lee responded that there are many reasons Three Rivers Park District would like to acquire land in fee title for this segment of the trail. The topography is very challenging in this area, and acquiring the full parcel allows for more flexibility for trail construction. The Park District is only working with willing sellers and acquiring parcels as they become available. They also wish to have land along the Mississippi River in public ownership to not only protect the river, water quality, and wildlife habitat, but also so people can access or view the river. Mullin added that Three Rivers had designated this area as fee-title acquisition in their long-range plan because of their desire for people to be able to experience the river.

2. **2023-261 SW:** Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range Plan, Ramsey County (Colin Kelly 651-602-1361)

It was moved by Vento, seconded by Lee that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Ramsey County's Battle Creek Regional Park Long-Range Plan.
2. Require Ramsey County, prior to initiating any development of the regional park, to send preliminary plans to the Environmental Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division.

Motion carried.

Ben Karp, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation, was also in attendance.

Council Member Vento said she liked the idea of adding fishing opportunities but expressed concern about PFAS. Karp responded that the County recognizes this is an emerging issue that merits investigation. Karp said the County is working with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to potentially offer opportunities through the Fishing in the Neighborhood Program, but that such opportunities may need to be purely recreational. Fish consumption would not be advised.

Council Member Lindstrom referenced challenges with water quality, noting Battle Creek's path under Highway 61 and asked about the watercourse itself, some of which has a concrete lining. Karp responded that the watershed district daylighted the creek in the late 1970s or early 1980s and there is still a stormwater structure in place that removes water from the surrounding neighborhood. Lindstrom also asked about the future of sledding opportunities near the current recreation center, noting that some landscape modifications had been made. Karp responded there were some use conflicts between sledders and cross-country skiers, as well as some injuries. Landscape design changes are intended to eliminate user conflicts and injuries.

Council Member Wulff asked about the residential properties that are proposed for acquisition. Karp responded that the properties are located within the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area, the County is working with willing sellers when they're prepared to sell, and that community members support connecting to Fish Creek Open Space along this corridor. Wulff asked whether property owners could still sell to whomever they wished. Karp responded that they could.

3. **2023-265 SW:** City of Victoria Amira Comprehensive Plan Amendment, Review File 21975-6 (Raya Esmaeili 651-602-1616)

It was moved by Wulff, seconded by Lee that the Metropolitan Council adopt the attached Review Record and take the following actions:

Authorize the City of Victoria to place its comprehensive plan amendment into effect.

Find that the amendment does not change the City's forecasts.

Find that the amendment renders the City's comprehensive plan inconsistent with the Council's housing policy and that the City is therefore ineligible to receive grant funds from the Livable Communities Act (LCA) programs.



Advise the City:

- To be consistent with Council housing policy, the City needs to regulate additional acres expected to develop in the 2021-2030 decade to a land use with a minimum density of 12 units per acre to accommodate a minimum of 118 additional units.
- To implement the advisory comments in the Review Record for Transportation and Wastewater.

Motion carried.

Council Member Lee inquired about the future land use map, specifically regarding the presence of a body of water on the amendment site, Esmaeili responded that the future land use designation encompasses the water area as well.

4. **2023-270 SW:** Application to the US Department of Transportation’s Thriving Communities Grant Program (LisaBeth Barajas 651-602-1895)

It was moved by Dolkar, seconded by Lee that the Metropolitan Council authorize the Executive Director of the Community Development Division to develop and submit a grant application and supporting documents as the lead agency for the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Thriving Communities Regional Pilot Program grant.

Motion carried.

Council Members briefly discussed how the grant could be used to build community and nonprofit capacity to continue participating in anti-displacement efforts and ongoing transit project planning, building on recommendations from the Blue Line Anti-Displacement Working Group.

Information

1. Community Development Grants - Overview and Annual Impact (Nicole Clapp 651-602-1723)

This information item provided an overview of the Community Development grant programs, as well as a review of the annual impact of the grant programs during calendar year 2022 and Q1-Q3 of 2023. The presentation will discuss grant programs for Livable Communities, Regional Parks and Trails, and Local Planning Assistance.

The review focused on high level funding impacts, with highlights on selected projects identified by program and grant staff. Grant staff anticipate sharing a similar presentation annually in future years to recognize the important work being accomplished around the region as the result of Community Development grant programs.

Council Members asked if formulas are set by statute. Staff responded it depends on the program, formulas are laid out by statutes, and implementing agencies are discussing formulas, and public input.

Council Members inquired into communications to applicants not receiving grants or applying and engagement for participation.

Barajas commented that the applicants must be a participating city, and negotiated by state law.

Clapp responded need is goal based, staff reaches out to communities during re-enrollment.

2. 2024 Payment Standards Discussion (Terri Smith 651-602-1187; Joel Huting 651-602-1349)
The Metropolitan Council must annually review and adopt Payment Standards (rent limits) to be used in the administration of the Housing Choice Voucher and other rent assistance



programs. The Council's *Thrive MSP 2040* and *2040 Housing Policy Plan* provide direction to offer housing options that give people in all life stages viable choices for stable housing, to develop and provide tools, including competitive rent limits in higher-cost communities to enable voucher holders to choose a location that best meets their needs and become a region with a broader housing spectrum where all people can thrive. Payment standards should be set at amounts that ensure voucher holders can be successful in placing their voucher in an area of their choice. The Council adopted Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs) in 2020. SAFMRs are rent limits at the zip code level instead of one rent for an entire metropolitan area. This allows for higher rent limits in higher rent areas of the region and lower rent limits in lower rent areas of the region. The goal of SAFMRs is to improve housing choice in all neighborhoods and increase voucher placement success.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued 2024 SAFMRs. Staff have been evaluating the new SAFMRs and analyzing rent prices around the region to inform the adoption of new payment standards. Staff shared data regarding the housing market, discussed the factors influencing payments standards, and gathered feedback from Council Members regarding their preferred option.

Council Members and staff discussed the affordability and costs of each option and option 3 was preferred among Council Members.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Community Development Committee meeting of November 6, 2023.

Council Contact:

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