

Minutes of the Meeting of the METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Thursday, January 7, 2021

Committee Members Present: Cecily Harris, Anthony Taylor, Todd Kemery, Tony Yarusso, Jeremy Peichel, Rick Theisen, Lolita Davis Carter, Bob Moeller, Nate Rich, and Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, liaison to the Council.

Committee Members Absent: none.

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Dingle did a roll call for a quorum.

With a quorum being present via WebEx, Committee Chair Yarusso called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:06 p.m. on Thursday, January 7, 2021.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a consensus to approve the January 7, 2021 agenda. **The agenda was approved.**

With a quorum present, Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the December 3, 2020 minutes. Davis Carter motioned, and it was seconded by Peichel to approve the December 3, 2020 minutes of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting. Secretary Dingle issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 9 (Davis Carter, Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Taylor, Theisen, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 0

The December 3, 2020 minutes were approved.

PUBLIC INVITATION

Chair Yarusso noted that the posted Agenda asked that anyone wishing to address the Commission should please email the Chair at mposc@tonyyarusso.org. He noted that he has not received a request to address the Commission at today's meeting.

BUINESS

2021-1, Rice Creek North Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment, Ramsey County - Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner

Kinney gave a presentation on the Rice Creek North Master Plan Amendment as submitted by Ramsey County and outlined in the materials provided.

Peichel asked whether the planned improvements to add wayfinding included water trails? Kinney stated that wayfinding signage will be planned throughout the regional trail. Scott Yonke, Ramsey County Parks added that wayfinding will be included throughout all improvement areas with a focus on trailheads.

Peichel asked if there is intent to expand education pieces to include aquatic invasive species information. Yonke responded that there is.

Peichel asked about a rental kiosk for canoes and kayaks. Yonke stated that Ramsey County is exploring providing additional amenities as reflected in the Master Plan.

Harris asked, why is this a regional trail and not a regional park? She stated she sees it as a regional park. Kinney stated that this is an existing regional trail (for 20 years) and added that over time the land around the trail corridor has expanded to include additional natural resources acreage.

Mullin added that Commissioner Harris has asked about this question before with similar trails. One big shift he's seen is promoting the development of amenities along trails as a way to draw a wider array of folks to the regional trails. He feels the Commission should discuss this topic further at a future meeting.

Harris asked whether there is anything the Commission can do about the long period of time it will take before this regional trail can expand as discussed in the future proposed acquisition area? Kinney stated that Ramsey County has a long-term acquisition strategy for this future expansion, and they are comfortable with the idea that they would need to submit a future system addition request to make this happen.

Harris asked about having a shuttle for canoes and bikes. Yonke, stated this is a great question and those are things they plan to explore in the future. Mullin added that the Commission will have the water trail discussion as identified in our 2021 Workplan and there will be an opportunity to discuss further.

Moeller asked about the ammunition plant, how much of the regional trail runs through the property. Kinney stated that a good portion of the future trail will run through this area and it will ultimately include building 189.

Moeller asked if there is concern about contamination? Yonke stated the area of building 189 is clean and added that the area acquired in 2019 was remediated. There are remaining sections of the army training site are still contaminated, but once acquired, there will be remediation done.

Chair Yarusso stated at one point in the distant past, the army had an even larger parcel of land. Parts of it have been sold off, including some to the County.

Chair Yarusso asked, regarding the water trail aspect, is the implementing agency taking over any role in water quality or is that still the responsibility of the Watershed District? Yonke stated that Ramsey County works closely with the District and has a regular coordinated maintenance work with them. They also partner with the Watershed on rehabilitation projects. Ultimately though, the creek is still under the Watershed's domain.

Kemery stated he is encouraged by the ADA planning that has been done and asked if consideration is being made to ADA accessibility to access points of the water trail? He also asked if picnic areas and bathrooms are ADA accessible? Kinney noted that the master plan does state that they are implementing a transition plan for ADA accessibility. Yonke stated they do focus on ADA on every aspect of design within their entire park system.

Chair Yarusso asked about plans for Bus Rapid Transit (on hold now) and if there are any plans for transit to this area. Kinney stated there are comments in the staff report that refer to changes due to COVID. She noted that there are other comments regarding possible additional routes in the future.

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

1. Approve the Ramsey County Rice Creek North Regional Trail Master Plan without the proposed boundary adjustment and proposed acquisitions.
2. Advise Ramsey County that the proposed boundary adjustment and associated 2,407.24-acre acquisition should be submitted to the Metropolitan Council as a system additions request in the next Regional Parks Policy Plan update, currently estimated for 2024.
3. Require that Ramsey County, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, send preliminary plans to the Environmental Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division.
4. Advise the County to implement the advisory comments regarding Transportation as described in this report.

Taylor asked about equity engagement and if there are any additional comments around access. He also asked about programming (and lack thereof). Kinney stated that the engagement work was done in 2018/2019. She noted that Ramsey County has a big push to do equity engagement. Yonke discussed

programming and stated this is a key area that they are looking at expanding in the future. This interest come up during their engagement work.

Taylor stated that he feels that public comments related to programming have been really strong. He is looking for a commitment from Ramsey County on this area.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked staff to coordinate with the DNR regarding parks and trails legacy funds to be utilized for innovation of design, programming and access equitably. She added that she would like to see that we don't just meet ADA standards but that we exceed expectations.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote. Secretary Dingle issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 9 (Carter, Harris, Kemery, Peichel, Moeller, Rich, Taylor, Theisen, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 0

The motion was approved.

2021-2, Regional Parks System Competitive Equity Grant Program, 2021 Notice of Funding Availability - Jessica Lee, Senior Planner

Lee gave a presentation on the Regional Parks System Competitive Equity Grant Program 2021 Notice of Funding Availability as outlined in the materials provided.

Rich asked, why is there a 'floor' of \$20,000 on the grants. Lee stated this is due to the administrative burden of managing lots of small grants. Chair Yarusso added that last year we discussed wanting agencies to think bigger.

Moeller stated he is very excited with this program but asked why the Metropolitan Council is not included as an eligible recipient. Lee stated that staff have decided against this due to the source of the funds. She said the Council remains committed to working closely with the implementing agencies on their equity work.

Moeller asked, if there were to be a region-wide marketing plan, wouldn't that be helpful? Lee stated that the Council can help, but an implementing agency would need to take the lead on this.

Peichel asked how many agencies have decade old transition plans? Lee stated there are two.

Peichel asked about the Council's role in this program. Lee stated our plan is to report on implementation progress every 6 months.

Atlas-Ingebretson stated we can ask staff and the Council to explore a joint marketing scheme to look at region-wide marketing around regional parks. She feels there are funds outside this grant money. Mullin stated we've just begun a systemwide Marketing study, and told the Commission that it would be kept informed.

Atlas-Ingebretson suggested some type of vote for Commissioners to record their support for this. Mullin stated, we can do that.

Harris noted she does grant writing and recommended against allowing extensions. She also asked about evaluation criteria regarding capacity, buildings, and prioritization. She asked about grant terms and if reporting is required. Lee responded that we are following the Metropolitan Council's terms on extensions for grants. Regarding capacity, she stated we are trying to be flexible. She added that a final report is required.

It was motioned by Theisen and seconded by Harris to recommend that the Metropolitan Council authorize the 2021 Regional Parks System Competitive Equity Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability attached to the staff report.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote. Secretary Dingle issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 9 (Carter, Harris, Kemery, Peichel, Moeller, Rich, Taylor, Theisen, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 0

The motion was approved.

INFORMATION

Parks and Trails Legacy Project Equity Highlights – Part 2: 5 agencies each have 5 minutes to present 2 slides each. 5 minutes for questions - Jessica Lee, Senior Planner and Amanda Lovelee, Outreach Coordinator

Lee gave a presentation on the Regional Park System FY2022/2023 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund project overview and equity highlights as outlined in the materials provided (Part II) and noted we will hear from 5 agencies today. Presentations began as follows:

Ramsey County: Scott Yonke discussed their six projects outlined in the presentation provided. He highlighted programing planned within Ramsey County Parks.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked, is Casa Esperanza the only outreach and who are the targeted audiences? Kris, Lencowski, Ramsey County stated Casa Esperanza was just one example. She noted that Ramsey County has not done programing in the past. The outreach is geared towards racial equity and she stated that they have a higher than average participation of persons of color. She noted they do partner with other organizations, i.e., Take Aim at Summer Fun.

Atlas-Ingebretson stated as we talk about proportional engagement, we continually see under representation of people of color.

Carver County: Marty Walsh discussed their six projects outlined in the presentation provided. Sam Pertz discussed the equity highlight – access, youth, and lower income communities.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked, how many people were engaged and what did that look like? Sam Pertz provided examples of work they've done with youth. He discussed connections made with youth organizations and schools, and adult programming for the future (not a lot now of opportunities now).

City of Bloomington: Renae Clark discussed their four projects outlined in the presentation. She highlighted Bush Lake Fishing Piers at Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park.

Kemery commended Bloomington on adding canoeing/kayaking.

Dakota County: Jeff Bransford discussed their three projects outlined in the presentation. He highlighted the Dakota County Parks Outreach and Engagement Coordinator position.

Atlas-Ingebretson commended Dakota County on their work.

Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board: Adam Arvidson discussed their six projects outlined in the presentation. He highlighted North Mississippi Regional Park.

Lee thanked all of the implementing agency staff for their presentations.

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso stated the application deadline for the open Commissioner appointments has been extended until the end of January.

Chair Yarusso reported that the Water Trails and also park like amenities are upcoming topics to be discussed at future meetings.

Chair Yarusso noted that once new Commissioners are seated, we will have a workshop to discuss equity.

Commissioners: None

Staff: Mullin stated that Districts A & D are looking for more applicants and asked Commissioners if they know of anyone interested in applying for MPOSC to please pass this information along.

Mullin reported that the Legislative session began and it's a budget year – Stay tuned.

Atlas-Ingebretson gave an update on discussions on her 'Next Door' learnings particularly around Theodore Wirth Regional Park. She discussed the increased usage of our parks due to the pandemic and some of the "growing pains" that have resulted.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary