

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: March 7, 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 4:03pm.

Agenda approved

Committee members did not have any comments or changes on the agenda.

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Moeller, seconded by Dillenburg to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2023, regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

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

It was moved by Duerr, seconded by Yarusso to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2024, regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

Jamie (no last name provided) shared her concern about safety and security in our parks, specifically Minneapolis Parks. It was noted by Council Member Vento that the Metropolitan Council takes safety in our parks very seriously. Vento shared that while the Council does not have jurisdiction over the Minneapolis Police Department or the Minneapolis Park Board's Police Department, she will carry this message forward and encouraged Jamie to reach out to them directly.

Business

1. Appointment of Bob Moeller as Vice-Chair to the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission for 2024.

It was moved by Chair Yarusso, seconded by Dillenburg, that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission approve the appointment of Bob Moeller as the Commission's Vice-Chair for 2024.

Motion carried.

2. **2024-52:** Rush Creek Regional Trail, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award (McCartney), Three Rivers Park District (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on the Rush Creek Regional Trail Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award request as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris stated that she supports the acquisition but was wondering about the Phase I costs and why not Phase 2. Lee responded that the Phase I costs are standard. Because there were no issues turned up during the Phase I investigation, Phase II was not required.

Chair Yarusso commented that the reuse of materials of the existing house is a positive.

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Duerr, that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$720,829 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Three Rivers Park District to acquire an 8.7-acre parcel located at 10775 Fernbrook Lane North in Maple Grove, MN, for the Rush Creek Regional Trail.
2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Moeller asked about the plans for the 8 acres being acquired for this trail. Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District stated there will be the development of a greenway corridor and maintenance of natural resources for animals and native species.

Motion carried.

3. **2024-53:** Big Marine Park Reserve, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award (Kelley), Washington County (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on Big Marine Park Reserve Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund award as outlined in the materials provided.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$2,725,384 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Washington County to acquire approximately 248 acres of park reserve land located in the southeast quadrant of Manning Avenue and 170th Street for the Big Marine Park Reserve.
2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

Harris stated she is very excited for this acquisition.

Chair Yarusso asked about the order of the phasing of this project. Lee responded that it is to maximize funds leveraged for this project.

The Commission discussed the remaining acquisition to complete this park reserve.

Yakes asked, will this be developed or kept in a natural state. JJ Williams, Washington County staff, stated that the park reserve will mostly be kept mostly natural, however there are some plans for future trails.

Motion carried.

Information

1. 2050 Regional Development Guide and Regional Parks Policy Plan Update (Kevin Phan, Colin Kelly, and Tracy Kinney)

Staff shared the revised draft regional parks and trails objectives, and emerging ideas on policies and actions based on recent discussions with Regional Park Implementing Agencies and the Metropolitan Council's Committee of the Whole. Council staff also provided the Commission with background information on the existing Regional Parks Policy Plan and how components of it may change going forward.

The Commission discussed some of the plan's terminology including defining what the regional system is and how it differs from local parks. There was also interest in clearly stating that this is a public comment draft that is not 'final', but rather one that will change.

The Commission discussed the content of the Regional Development Guide, and what will go into it versus Parks Policy. There was support that the 'Existing Conditions' such as demographics, trends, and climate change would be covered once in the front section of the Guide.

Dillenburg suggested a smaller, more accessible document such as an executive summary for the general population to read.

Chair Yarusso shared his thoughts on the 'parks and trails planning handbook' idea. He was supportive of the concept of moving procedural content to the handbook but expressed concerns about the experience he had with the Grant Administration Guide. He worries that a planning handbook will be the same. He would like to see the Handbook reviewed and approved before the Regional Parks Policy, including something in the policy plan that describes what the Handbook is and how it will be updated.

Staff said that a link to the Grant Administration Guide will be sent to commission members.

Reports

1. Chair

Chair Yarusso asked the Commission to do brief introductions as there are new members.

Chair Yarusso discussed the Equity Grant Program that has been reviewed and commented that this program has improved with each year. He reminded staff that we need a general policy on this program in the Policy Plan.

2. Committee Members

Harris stated that the Washington County Glacial Hills Regional Trail Citizen Advisory Committee is meeting this week and noted a Washington County referendum is being considered.

3. Council Liaison

No report.

4. Staff

Mullin noted that there will be an orientation for new commission members soon. He also noted that the Legislative session is underway and gave a brief update.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 6:04 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 March 7, 2024.

Approved this 4th day of April 2024.

Council contact:

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