

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, February 6, 2018

Committee Members Present:

Tony Yarusso, Rick Theisen, Catherine Fleming, Sarah Hietpas, Anthony Taylor, Wendy Wulff

Committee Members Absent:

Todd Kemery, Margie Andreason, Mike Kopp, Bob Moeller

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:06 p.m. on Tuesday, February 6, 2018.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the February 6, 2018 Agenda. Taylor motioned, and it was seconded by Fleming to approve the agenda. The **Agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 2, 2018 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. It was motioned by Theisen and seconded by Taylor. The **Minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

None.

INFORMATION

2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan Update – Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst Parks and Dan Marckel, Planning Analyst Research

Youngquist and Marckel gave an overview on the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan (RPPP) update and discussed strengthening equitable use as outlined in the materials provided.

Marckel reviewed population growth expected (800,000 people) from 2010-2040. He noted as part of that growth we will see an increase in people of color, along with an aging population and its implications for our parks. He discussed the importance of increasing equitable use of our parks by all of our residents.

Youngquist discussed outreach and engagement that has been done to help inform the needs of our parks. She discussed equity concepts which fall into three categories: Regional Park System Planning, Funding and Investment, and Convening and Information.

Marckel asked for questions.

Fleming asked about transit and access to parks. Youngquist stated they are looking at multimodal use and stated that the current plan encourages increased transportation options to parks where appropriate.

Fleming asked about how the Council will help the Regional Parks System address kids' needs as well as the elderly. Youngquist stated that this gets into operational issues that falls to the implementing agencies' role.

Fleming asked if there will be signage in different languages as well as braille signage. Wulff talked about more signs that are visual (pictures) and not language based.

Youngquist brought the discussion back to transportation and noted that there is language in the RPPP for improving wayfinding. Marckel stated that transportation planners are interested in collaborating on this topic as well. Youngquist also talked about the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes master plan that is coming out soon and how it addresses transportation.

Chair Yarusso discussed non-local visits needing transit.

Wulff stated there was quite a bit of discussion about this in the last RPPP update. She noted that folks can use alternatives like Dial-a-ride.

Theisen discussed the importance of our priorities going beyond trails and into areas for kids. He suggested the importance of using parks in other ways such as education and nature-based programming opportunities.

Taylor discussed awareness being a top issue as well as education.

Chair Yarusso discussed lack of awareness and stated this is an area of potential improvement for the regional system. He felt we also need to communicate what to expect users to know and discussed the need for coordinated outreach.

Wulff stated we need to start looking at parks through other people's eyes. She commented on informal ballfields – we are not asked the implementing agencies to cut down trees to create playing fields but to utilize existing open spaces.

Fleming discussed the need to be aware of people new to the region and to understand what their needs are. She discussed engaging school systems and employers and suggested creating a video to let folks know what is available.

Taylor discussed special efforts to create utilization of different cultures and stated we need a regional effort. He discussed the need for regional solicitation for equitable use of our system that has a measurable outcome.

Youngquist discussed funding and investments.

Fleming discussed the importance of increasing people of color on the regional park agencies' boards and staff.

Marckel asked if committee members feel equipped to review grant projects.

Chair Yarusso discussed past conversations regarding equity that this committee has had and noted that a big part of these grant applications are reviewed and approved for capital improvement projects at the local agency level where we have no jurisdiction.

Mullin stated that disbursement of many of our funding programs is guided by state statutes. The equity tool kit helps in the discussion of how proposed projects advance equity. He feels this was an opportunity for the implementing agencies to articulate how their projects advance equity.

Taylor stated he feels programing is needed to advance equity. He feels we need a pot of money we can distribute that will encourage the implementing agencies to be creative.

Theisen feels the concept of equity is still new and needs to evolve. He discussed the need to further flesh out what equity means and also a way to measure outcomes and successes.

Marckel discussed convening and information and asked the committee if they would be interested in this topic.

Fleming discussed groups that have popped up in her district, showing an interest in convening and involvement in project priorities. She stated these are grass roots groups (some are funded, some are not) that are looking at environment, agriculture, and parks.

Taylor noted that this Commission doesn't get into the details of determining how parks are operated. This is done by the implementing agencies – who then come to us for funding. He noted that what is

important is that the engagement is happening in a more authentic way. He discussed this committee's role and asked if the committee if we would ever reach a point where we said, we don't think you have done enough community engagement, and you will not receive funding.

Mullin discussed the direction given by our RPPP regarding expectations for community engagement. He noted that staff review how master planning is conducted to ensure that the heightened expectations for engagement have been met.

Chair Yarusso discussed the question 'do we have enough information about engagement' asked by Marckel and noted that we are often only seeing this topic during the master planning process. He suggested committee members could attend some of the community engagement sessions to help them feel they are making informed decisions.

Taylor felt this is a good idea for commission members to pursue, so that we can have a better idea about what goes into this process, and then feel more confident in our decisions.

Theisen stated it can be more complicated as some community groups are bigger/stronger as well as other factors at play. He agreed however that it would be helpful.

Wulff commented that she agreed with Chair Yarusso but noted that we often hear from those groups who didn't get their way – or didn't feel heard - but this doesn't mean there wasn't meaningful engagement.

Marckel stated that when they talked with the implementing agencies, they heard similar comments. He encouraged committee members to review the minutes from this meeting and see that their points were taken.

Dingle added that if Commissioners feel any comments were missed, send these to her rather than spending a great deal of time at the next meeting reviewing minutes. She noted that by Roberts Rules, minutes need only contain motions and actions taken. The minutes here include more discussion because this committee is an advisory committee however they are not a full transcription of the discussions that have taken place.

Youngquist reviewed the timeline for the RPPP update. Chair Yarusso noted that written comments were received and made available to all in attendance. He noted that the committee would not be taking public comment at this time because the meeting needs to end by 6:00p.m. due to the precinct caucuses tonight.

BUSINESS

2018-36 Rich Valley Regional Trail Master Plan, Dakota County – Michael Peterka, Planner

Peterka gave a presentation on the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail submitted by Dakota County as outlined in the materials provided.

Fleming asked if the trail goes to the Mississippi River. Peterka stated that it connects to the Mississippi River Regional Trail.

Fleming asked if there are any amenities along the trail. Peterka responded that there are plans for restrooms and a parking lot.

Taylor asked if we have current bike counts. John Mertens, Dakota County staff, stated that low density areas don't have numbers, but noted the trail does connect to Lebanon Hills Regional Park. He noted the length of the trail is relatively short (5 miles) and they feel like it will be used a lot to get to Lebanon Hills. He discussed cyclists that are commuting tend to utilize the roads.

Wulff described the connection to the Mississippi River Regional Trail and also a future connection to Spring Lake Regional Park.

Taylor asked if Cliff Road will be abandoned. John Mertens stated that there are plans to realign Cliff Road at which time this section of Cliff Road will most likely be abandoned.

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

1. Approve the Rich Valley Greenway Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Require Dakota County to submit a cost sharing approach with the City of Inver Grove Heights for the development of the trailhead in Rich Valley Park prior to seeking regional parks funding for the project.
3. Inform Dakota County that if alternative trail alignments are chosen, the county must submit estimated acquisition and development costs to the Council prior to seeking regional parks funding. The Council will not provide regional parks funding for duplicate trail alignments.

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

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso noted that the By-laws state that we 'can' take public comment but it is not required.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Mullin announced that Michael Peterka is leaving the Council. He noted that the Parks Ambassador position is posted as well as the Park Planner position.

Mullin reported that the first Legacy Celebration was held at Silverwood Regional Park and was well attended. This is the first of 8 events. The next event in the region will be held on May 11th at the Hyland Lake Park Reserve.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary