

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, May 5, 2015

Committee Members Present:

William Weber, Sarah Hietpas, Anthony Taylor, Rick Theisen, Robert Moeller, Dean Johnston, Michael Kopp, Rachel Gillespie Wendy Wulff, Council Liaison

Committee Members Absent: None.

Swearing In:

New members, Michael Kopp and Rachel Gillespie were sworn in prior to the start of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Johnston called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 5, 2015.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Johnston asked for motion to approve the agenda of the May 5, 2015 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Moeller motioned and it was seconded by Theisen. **Agenda was approved.**

Chair Johnston asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2015 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Weber motioned and it was seconded by Taylor. **Minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

Invitation to interested person(s) to address the Commission on matters not on the agenda.

Edna Brazaitis publically thanked Arne Stefferud for his contributions over the years as he embarks on his retirement.

BUSINESS

Orientation on Metropolitan Regional Park System and Metropolitan Parks & Open Space Commission – Jan Youngquist, Manager and Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst

Introductions were made for the benefit of the two new members. Youngquist gave a brief overview on the regional parks system including the creation of and structure of the regional park system. Stefferud gave an overview of the financial side of regional parks.

Weber pointed out much of this information is in the policy plan.

Wulff noted the importance of the work of this commission and stated that these business items are usually passed through the Community Development Committee and the Council with little or no discussion as Council Members rely on the work of MPOSC.

Theodore Wirth Regional Park Master Plan and Grant Request, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board – Jan Youngquist, Manager

Youngquist gave a presentation on the updated Master Plan for Theodore Wirth Regional Park as well as a grant request for improvements described in the staff report provided. She noted that the 5th staff recommendation should have included the word 'buildings' as well.

Kopp asked if the grant request would be for projects on land not yet acquired. Youngquist stated they are not.

Weber clarified if money set aside in 2011 is all there is. Youngquist stated there has also been money set aside in the 2012 CIP.

Weber asked about private funding campaigning done. Youngquist stated that page 13 of the staff report discusses funding sources proposed.

Moeller asked if the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) decided to add an item, not currently in the master plan, would they have to modify this plan. Youngquist stated that if it would require capital improvement funding, they would need to do an amendment.

Hietpas asked if there are plans to improve access to this park through public transit. Youngquist stated that the Bottineau project is planning for one or more stations within the park. She also noted that there is currently bus service to the Chalet in the park.

Weber commended the work and the public/private partnerships formed.

Taylor stated, relative to equity, he felt the MPRB was very intentional to building equity into the plan.

Hietpas stated that her concern with access is directly related to what she feels is part of the equity issue. Youngquist stated that staff research has shown that lack of awareness was one of the primary reasons for lack of usage.

Moeller stated he shares Hietpas's concern about access to the park.

Wulff pointed out all the different buses that service the park currently.

Taylor agreed with staff's research regarding awareness vs. access.

Adam Arvidson, MPRB added that staff are working closely with the Bottineau project people to ensure that there will be good connections.

Theisen asked if the Bottineau project doesn't occur is access currently being addressed. Arvidson stated that there is bus service to the Chalet currently, as well as other bus service. He also discussed the many trail connections throughout the park. He noted that there is also programming within the park that buses people in for specific events.

Weber asked if there are plans to rehab the Parkway. Andrea Weber, Project Manager MPRB stated that there is no proposal to change the Parkway, however it may require improvements in time. Weber suggested widening it for safety purposes.

Edna Brazaitis, an active member of the Sierra Club stated that she hopes that in the future transit opportunities are watched for as they are key to equity. She discussed the economic challenges for some people in the parks and encouraged people to keep this in mind as well.

Shawn Fitzgerald, Minneapolis Park Watch stated that the MPRB doesn't post budgets. She noted it's very hard to be critical and make comments during the public process when projected costs aren't given. She passed out a staff report and discussed improvements that do not meet the criteria for the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan. She cautioned commission members approving a grant for improvements that are not what they would consider to be for public purposes. She noted that North Wirth is becoming a revenue producing area and asked that the Event Center not be funded until regional park purposes can be shown. She discussed the money being lost in winter recreation.

It was motioned by Weber seconded by Taylor to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Theodore Wirth Regional Park Master Plan.
2. Require that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board submit estimated land acquisition costs that were not quantified in the master plan as part of a master plan amendment for Metropolitan Council review and approval prior to seeking future grants for land acquisition.

3. Require that prior to initiating development within the regional park, preliminary plans must be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager at Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review in order to assess the potential impacts to the regional interceptor system.
4. Inform the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board that costs associated with modifications or improvements associated with the golf courses are not eligible for regional parks funding.

Chair Johnston called for a vote. **The motion carried unanimously.**

It was motioned by Weber and seconded by Gillespie to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

5. Approve a grant in the amount of \$1,743,000 from the 2011 Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program, comprised of \$1,569,000 in State bonds and \$174,000 in Council bonds. This grant shall be used for design and construction consistent with the North Wirth concept in the master plan, including trail development, buildings, bridges, landscaping, grading, parking areas, lighting, downhill infrastructure, utilities, surveys and site investigations, design, and project management.

Weber noted that the issues raised by Fitzgerald are outside the purview of this commission. Youngquist stated that this is correct. She discussed the different types of uses at the event center that would exclude the use of state bonds for its construction.

Arvidson noted that they are still early in the design process. He noted that it has been envisioned to have public space in conjunction with the Loppet Foundation.

Moeller spoke to the concerns of Fitzgerald and asked if there are inconsistencies with our policy that we need to re-examine before considering this motion.

Hietpas clarified that \$1.7 million is much less than the overall budget.

Youngquist discussed special events done at our regional parks all the time therefore this is not an issue. The issue would be with state bonds being used for non-public purpose. She noted that other funds could be used however. She suggested excluding the event center from this grant usage.

Arvidson stated that they have a MOU with the Loppet Foundation. They will fund the construction of the building. MPRB will be using the grant for the integrated design process and answering to public process. He noted that the MPRB will own the building once it has been constructed.

Stefferdud noted that these are legal questions. He stated that the Loppet Foundation is a 501(c)(3) – a non-profit entity. As administrators of the grant we need to be sure what is done is for public purposes. He noted that we can table this and bring it back to our next meeting.

Wulff suggested not delaying the vote. She asked staff to bring it to the Legal Department and she can amend the motion at the Community Development Meeting if needed.

Taylor felt supportive of this language.

Chair Johnston called for a vote. **The motion carried unanimously.**

Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for St. Croix Valley Regional Trail, Carpenter Nature Center Easement, Washington County - Tori Dupre, Senior Planner

Dupre gave a presentation on the request from Washington County outlined in the staff report provided.

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

1. Authorize a grant of up to \$288,172 to Washington County to acquire an easement for the St. Croix Valley Regional Trail.

- a. The Metropolitan Council will finance the grant through the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund, with Metropolitan Council bonds funding 75 percent of the total acquisition costs.
 - b. Washington County will match the grant with \$96,057, or 25 percent of the total acquisition costs.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to sign the grant agreement including the restrictive covenant.

Chair Johnston called for a vote. **The motion carried unanimously.**

INFORMATION

2016-2021 Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program Structure and Timeline - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst

Stefferud gave a presentation regarding the next funding cycle outlined in the staff report provided.

Chair Johnston noted that questions may be directed to staff.

REPORTS

Chair: None.

Commissioners: Moeller noted he has written to Portland, Oregon for information regarding their biking community as they claim to have 'the best' system. Youngquist stated that she used to live in Portland and they have 'bike lanes' not a trail system like ours.

Moeller reported on a washed-out regional trail and asked what we can do to get it fixed. Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District stated that they are aware of the washout. He noted that the Park District leases this land and that it is Hennepin County's responsibility to make the repairs. He stated that they are working with them to get it done.

Staff: Youngquist discussed upcoming tours for the Commission to begin in July.

Youngquist announced that Mark Themig is leaving Scott County. He took a job in California.

Stefferud stated that the Operations and Maintenance bill will go through the conference committee soon. The Legacy Bill was passed by the House and the Senate is working on it tonight. He noted that the Environmental Natural Resources Trust Fund Bill is being heard tonight.

ADJOURNMENT

6:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary