

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, May 3, 2016

Committee Members Present:

Dean Johnston, Todd Kemery, Sarah Hietpas, Robert Moeller, and Wendy Wulff, Council Liaison

Committee Members Absent: Rick Theisen, Bill Weber, Anthony Taylor, Rachel Gillespie and Michael Kopp

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Johnston called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:10 p.m. on Tuesday, May 3, 2016.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Johnston stated that because there was not a quorum present he wished to start with the information items on the agenda and save the business items for the later part of the meeting in the hopes that a quorum may become present.

Chair Johnson waived the request for a motion to approve the minutes as there was not a quorum present.

INFORMATION

Acquisition Fund Balance and Bonding Updates – Deb Jensen, Senior Parks Finance Planner

Jensen gave a presentation to provide a quarterly update on Regional Parks funding levels, including the status of the state bonding considerations at the legislature and balances in the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund.

2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan: Implementation Update on Equity Related Policies - Raintry Salk, Research Analyst and Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst

An update was given on the implementation of equity related policies in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* that adhered to directives put forward in Thrive MSP 2040.

Youngquist stated there are thirteen equity related policies put forward in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* to strengthen equitable use. She discussed three stakeholder driven recommendations that fell under Planning and Design including:

1. Allow for “bridging projects”, such as Special Recreation Feature pilot projects to encourage creativity and experimentation to attract and introduce new outdoor recreation users to the Regional Parks System.
2. Allow and encourage the following design elements to be included in a regional park or trail master plan:
 - Amenities suited for aging and limited mobility individuals
 - Picnic areas suitable for 15-25 people
 - Large open, informal ball fields
 - Clustering of amenities
3. Require focused community engagement among agencies in the development of regional park or trail master plans

- Mitigate existing racial, ethnic, cultural or linguistic barriers and includes diverse races, ethnicities, classes, ages, abilities and immigrant statuses

Salk reviewed six stakeholder recommendations that are within the Convene/Information category:

1. Provide community engagement assistance to regional park implementing agencies in developing a regional park or trail master plan
2. Provide regional-level research related to changing recreational preferences and demographics
3. Conduct region-wide visitor survey on a more consistent basis
4. Create a MC funded regional park system ambassador program
5. Invest in the development of an integrated web application with an activity/park finder feature
6. Conduct quarterly “best practices” meetings with agencies, partners, community based organizations and advocacy groups

Salk reviewed four recommendations for funding and summary including:

1. Begin Met Council staff involvement in the prioritization of grant funding for the Capital Improvement Program and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund grant programs, using an equity lens as defined by the Metropolitan Council
2. Require agencies to identify the direct impact their funding request would have on strengthening equitable use
3. Create a competitive grant program with Met Council park bonds for capital projects that specifically aim to address strengthening equitable usage of the regional parks system
4. Require a certain percentage of each agencies’ share of their Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriations be used to “connect people to the outdoors” (one of the four pillars of the 25 year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan)

The timeline for the development of the Equity Tool Kit, the Ambassador Program, the Competitive Equity Grant Program, and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund Minimum % determination was discussed.

Kemery asked about the survey team and if there is a schedule of where/when they will be conducting the survey. Salk noted that it will be randomized from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Moeller asked if there is a collaborative process with the implementing agencies in the development of the Equity Tool Kit. Salk stated that agencies have been invited to participate in the workgroup development process.

Moeller asked if it is working well and if there is a sense of collaboration. Salk noted they are also working with other community groups.

Moeller noted that it would be nice to have a program that was accepted by all.

Holly Jenkins, resident asked how collaboration with local parks is being done. Youngquist stated that during the master planning process, the implementing agencies work with local staff.

Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District noted that there have been three two-hour meetings and at the last meeting there were 60-70 questions produced. He stated he is not aware of any agencies involvement to whittle these down to produce a final product. Salk stated that a survey will be going out to come up with a final toolkit.

PUBLIC INVITATION

At this time, Chair Johnston asked if there was anyone from the public that wished to speak on items not on the agenda.

Mike Kimble, St. Paul Parks stated that Jody Martinez is retiring and Kathy Korum will be interim Manager of Design and Construction. He also noted that he will be leaving the city as well and Ellen Stuart will be replacing him.

Mullin thanked both Kimble and Martinez for their service.

REPORTS

Chair: None.

Staff: Mullin invited Jonathan Vlaming to discuss the MN River Bluff's LRT Regional Trail that experienced a massive washout after heavy rains. Vlaming noted it is owned by Hennepin County and they have applied for a FEMA grant but it was denied. He stated that Representative Erik Paulsen is aware of the situation and there is a push to appeal FEMA's ruling. He noted that there is a detour in place and stated they are looking at possible permanent re-routes. Vlaming stated that the best case scenario is that FEMA would approve the appeal and reconstruction would be completed next summer.

Moeller asked if there are any opportunities to take the trail off the road. Vlaming stated they can look at talking to Chanhassen and Carver County.

Mullin pointed out that Three Rivers Park District provided a fact book for Commissioners and noted that it is updated annually.

Mullin also passed out the printed *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plans*.

Mullin discussed changing the meeting dates in July and August due to the 4th of July holiday and also the 'National Night Out' on August 2nd. It was determined that Mullin would poll all members via email.

BUSINESS

Chair Johnston noted that the Commission still did not have a quorum. It was decided to hear the business items and forward them without a formal recommendation to the Community Development Committee (CDC).

Central Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment and Reimbursement Consideration for Pedestrian Tunnel, Anoka County - Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst

Youngquist gave a presentation outlining the request from Anoka County to approve a Master Plan Amendment for Central Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan as well as consideration for reimbursement for costs associated with a pedestrian tunnel as outlined in the materials provided.

Moeller felt this would add safety and usability and stated he is in favor the staff's recommendation.

Chair Johnston stated this would be forwarded to the CDC with the staff recommendation. Wulff noted that she felt it is a non-controversial recommendation and she feels comfortable having it go to CDC and the full Council.

Staff's recommendation is as follows:

That the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Central Anoka County Regional Trail Master Plan Amendment.
2. Consider reimbursing Anoka County up to \$170,000 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program for costs associated with a pedestrian tunnel under CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard that connects the Central Anoka County Regional Trail to Bunker Hills Regional Park.

3. Inform Anoka County that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that reimbursement will be granted, and expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

Facility Exchange for CSAH 116 Project at Bunker Hills Regional Park, Anoka County – Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst

Youngquist gave a presentation regarding the request from Anoka County for a facility exchange for CASH 116 project at Bunker Hills Regional Park as outlined in the staff report provided.

Kemery asked if this was a time sensitive issue. Youngquist stated it is as they would like to begin construction soon.

Chair Johnston asked if staff felt this was an equitable exchange. Youngquist stated this accelerates the development of the master plan without any outlay of money. Wulff stated it's a win/win.

Moeller and Kemery voiced their support.

Chair Johnston again pointed out that there was not a quorum present but that the staff recommendation would be forwarded onto CDC.

The staff recommendation was that the Metropolitan Council approve the conversion of 4.45 acres of land within Bunker Hills Regional Park needed for the CSAH 116/Bunker Lake Boulevard reconstruction project in exchange for the development of one mile of trail within the park, construction of one mile of the Central Anoka County Regional Trail north of the park, and realignment of a park entrance road, as shown in Attachments 1-5.

REPORTS

Commissioners: Moeller requested that staff continue working with the implementing agencies so that there is collaboration.

Hietpas asked if there will be any site visits this summer. She also stated that at the last meeting the Commission discussed 'public engagement' and she would like to see this discussed further on an upcoming agenda.

Mullin stated that he is looking into park tours and noted that Hietpas's second request was a reasonable one and he would look into that as well.

ADJOURNMENT

5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary