

Minutes of the

METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Thursday, December 5, 2019

Committee Members Present: Cecily Harris, Todd Kemery, Rick Theisen, Tony Yarusso, Jeremy Peichel, Bob Moeller, and Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, liaison to the Council.

Committee Members Absent: Anthony Taylor, Margie Andreason.

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 4:02 p.m. on Thursday, December 5, 2019.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the December 5, 2019 agenda. It was motioned by Harris and seconded by Moeller to approve the agenda. **The agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 7, 2019 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. It was motioned by Theisen and seconded by Kemery. **The minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

Catherine Zimmer, Executive Director of Women Observing Wildlife, discussed the history of the park system and residents' desire, when asked, to preserve and protect nature. She discussed grant dollars used for construction. She discussed nature-based parks and their relationship to climate change and expressed concerns around diminishing wildlife populations.

Zimmer suggested that park implementing agencies heed what residents have requested including more nature-based programming and natural resource protection.

BUINESS

2019-345, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant for Rush Creek Regional Trail (Higgins), Three Rivers Park District – Jessica Lee, Senior Planner Parks

Lee gave a presentation on the grant request from Three Rivers Park District (TRPD) for a park acquisition opportunity fund grant for Rush Creek Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

Yarusso asked if the full 28% that TRPD will be contributing is eligible for reimbursement? Lee stated that it will be.

Theisen asked about future development plans. Lee stated that future development is 10 years out. Jonathan Vlaming, TRPD, discussed building logical segments, however noted that they are very much in the acquisition phase now. He discussed stewardship that is being done as acquisitions occur.

Moeller asked if there is any opportunity to use the house on the property in the interim, if development isn't going to happen for ten years. Mullin stated that a house that generated revenue is considered an 'enterprise facility' and would not be legal. Mullin discussed that life estates are an arrangement that park agencies have made in the past, where owners sell their property but arrange an agreement that allows them to remain in their dwelling for specific time period.

Chair Yarusso discussed tax increment financing and category rules that would be applied. He stated that he understands Moeller's point and added it may be

something to discuss with a legislator to develop a program that would assign a steward to take over the home in cases like this.

Atlas-Ingebretson discussed moving homes, when able, to Council owned properties.

Chair Yarusso discussed agencies, i.e., Trust for Public Land, getting involved.

Theisen motioned, and it was seconded by Moeller to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$435,925 to Three Rivers Park District to acquire the 5.27-acre Higgins property located at 10530 Holly Lane North in the City of Maple Grove for the Rush Creek Regional Trail.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.
3. Consider reimbursing Three Rivers Park District for up to \$170,245 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Bonding Program for costs associated with their local match.
4. Inform Three Rivers Park District that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that the Council will grant future reimbursement and that expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **Motion carried.**

INFORMATION

System Wide: Regional Trails and Secondary Recreational Opportunities – Tracey Kinney, Parks Planner

Kinney gave a presentation on system wide regional trails and secondary recreational opportunities. She was joined by Adam Arvidson, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and Alice Messer from Saint Paul Parks and Recreation.

Commissioners participated in an exercise where they were asked to identify what recreational uses should be included with regional trails and also what types of secondary recreational opportunities should be considered.

The Commission discussed nature-based trails versus other trails that support evolving secondary recreational use that promote equitable use of our parks. This discussion is meant to start the conversation to proposed innovations for regional trails, to explore a wider array of recreational uses to meet changing recreational preferences.

Arvidson gave an overview of a Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail and Shingle Creek Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

Messer discussed St. Paul's trail system and stated they are hearing people want more near-trail amenities and opportunities. She discussed the demographic of users and gave a sneak peek of the Lower Landing Master Plan.

Moeller discussed long held definitions for regional parks and trails versus local parks and trails and asked if these changes being discussed should be defined within our policy. Kinney responded that this is the beginning of the conversation and staff looks forward to more input.

Chair Yarusso discussed the importance of the specific funding source for diverse types of uses. Opportunities adjacent to a regional bicycle or pedestrian trail or even within a wider portion of a trail corridor should be complementary, but the Council may choose not to fund development or redevelopment of amenities that don't closely align with policy or are predominately local in their orientation.

Harris discussed these diverse uses in the urban areas but doesn't feel it's a good idea in rural or more natural areas. She wondered if locational language could be considered in a policy.

Atlas-Ingebretson discussed the history and evolution of our parks and how change is not new. She discussed the need to balance important values like nature preservation and equity, and to understand and be a part of local solutions to climate change issues.

Chair Yarusso discussed the variety of park classifications and agency responsibilities, including regional, county and local parks and suggested there may be value to reviewing how these classifications are articulated in policy.

Draft Equity Analysis Requirement for Regional Park and Trail Master Planning – Tracey Kinney, Parks Planner and Darcie Vandegrift, Principal Researcher

Kinney and Vandegrift gave a presentation on the draft equity analysis for park and trail master plans and requested input from Commissioners through discussion guided by the following two questions:

- What advice do Commissioners have for the Council and implementing agencies to fulfill the requirement?
- What do Commissioners need from staff to inform their deliberations on the Equity Analysis Requirement?

Commissioners reviewed the draft equity analysis requirements for master plans.

Chair Yarusso referenced the Scope item (item a. under Project Data) and underscored the value of both local and regional levels of engagement.

Chair Yarusso discussed the Advice, Transparency, and Accountability items (item c. under Public Engagement and Participation, and items a. and b. under Evaluation Summary, respectively), and said a critical part of this requirement is agencies clear communication of how thoughtful engagement has impacted the development concept or other recommendations.

Harris asked what is known about future stakeholders – who are they, how do we define? Vandegrift discussed ongoing youth in parks research and that population forecasting may be used.

Mullin noted that master plans tend to be 10-20 year documents so thoughtful consideration of demographic trends and forecasts is important.

Kemery discussed creating new opportunities for those with disabilities, i.e., quiet play spaces for sensory sensitive participants. He also discussed equipment for those with mobility issues.

Atlas-Ingebretson talked about training. She discussed 1. b. of the Equity Analysis where ‘Equity’ is in bold and asked if this is the right word to be using here. She discussed desegregation of terms – ‘underserved populations’, ‘ability’, ‘equity’, and ‘gender’.

Chair Yarusso stated that Equity is the end goal.

Overview of the System Additions Project – Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst and Dan Marckel, Planning Analyst

Kelly gave an overview of the system additions project as outlined in the presentation and materials provided.

Marckel provided an overview of questions posed to implementing agency partners at the first project meeting in October and shared them with Commissioners for their input.

The Commissioners discussed some of their answers. Marckel noted the answers would be collected and compared to the input received from the implementing agencies.

Marckel noted that this topic would likely be brought back to the Commission in the near future.

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso discussed the Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee is looking for applicants. The deadline is 12/13.

Chair Yarusso discussed closing times of our parks being so early due to it getting dark earlier and this precludes many folks who work during the day to using our parks. Harris noted that it is a safety issue after dark. Atlas-Ingebretson discussed programing that could be done in the evenings for a future topic of discussion.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Mullin introduced Nicole Clapp, the new grants administrator.

Mullin noted that the January MPOSC meeting will be moved to January 7th.

Mullin discussed the Art Shanty Project occurring in Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park (on Lake Harriet) the last two weekends in January and the first two weekends in February. Council Regional Parks staff are designing and coordinating staffing of a Regional Parks Art Shanty and are looking for volunteers to help staff the event.

Mullin noted that there are now two vacancies on MPOSC: Districts C and D, and that the Council is seeking interested applicants.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary