

Minutes of the Meeting of the

METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Thursday, October 1, 2020

Committee Members Present: Cecily Harris, Anthony Taylor Tony Yarusso, Jeremy Peichel, Nate Rich, Rick Theisen, Lolita Davis Carter, Bob Moeller and Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, liaison to the Council.

Committee Members Absent: Todd Kemery

CALL TO ORDER

Secretary Dingle did a roll call for a quorum.

Present: 7 at the time of the roll call. Note: one member (Davis Carter) joined during the meeting.

With a quorum being present via WebEx, Committee Chair Yarusso called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:03 p.m. on Thursday, October 1, 2020.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a consensus to approve the October 1, 2020 agenda. **The agenda was approved.**

With a quorum present, Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the September 3, 2020 minutes.

Moeller motioned and it was seconded by Harris to approve the September 3, 2020 minutes of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting. Secretary Dingle issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 8 (Carter, Harris, Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Taylor, Theisen, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

The September 3, 2020 minutes were approved.

PUBLIC INVITATION

Chair Yarusso noted that the posted Agenda asked that anyone wishing to address the Commission should please email the Chair at mposc@tonyyarusso.org. He noted that no one wished to address the Commission.

BUSINESS

2020-243, Grand Round North Regional Trail Master Plan, City of St. Paul – Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst

Kelly gave a presentation on the Grand Round North Regional Trail Master Plan submitted by the City of St. Paul as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris likes the project and asked if the plans for the pedestrian pathway are all paved – currently and future plans. Kelly stated that a large portion of this corridor has been completed and paved. Harris asked with distance walkers in mind, as paved cement paths are hard on the feet.

Moeller asked about equity-oriented activity or actions that would increase usage by underrepresented populations. Kelly shared an overview of the engagement done and what was learned. Alice Messer, City of St. Paul, added that there was significant targeted community engagement done along the corridor.

Moeller asked whether at this point in the Master Planning process, it is a good time to talk about what can be done to increase usage to underserved populations, for instance providing signage in multiple languages.

Kelly noted on his recent visit to the trail corridor, he encountered signage with multiple languages. Messer stated there will be additional interpretive nodes and signage as well as public art.

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

1. Approve the City of Saint Paul's Grand Round North Regional Trail Master Plan.
2. Require the City of Saint Paul, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division Assistant Manager.
3. Encourage the City of Saint Paul to implement the advisory comments in the "Consistency with Other Council Policies and Systems" section regarding stormwater, natural resources and solar.

Secretary Dingle issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 7 (Harris, Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Taylor, Theisen, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 1 (Carter)

The motion was approved.

2020-244, Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan, including new supplemental information on proposed park-like amenities within the regional trail corridor, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board – Colin Kelly, Planning Analyst

Kelly gave a presentation on the Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan on behalf of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as outlined in the materials provided.

Taylor discussed additional wayfinding towards North Mississippi Regional Trail and asked if there were comments on this? Adam Arvidson, MPRB, stated this information is significant focus of the narrative within the master plan.

Harris stated she is confused about the evaluation of amenities and asked, should this be a regional park instead of a regional trail.

Yarusso stated this is an interesting point. He discussed other trails with park-like recreation nodes along the trail corridor.

Harris stated it seems like we are trying to force a regional park to be a regional trail or vice-versa.

Atlas-Ingebretson stated we are seeing regional trails with amenities that allow for connections and amenities that attract diverse visitors.

Arvidson clarified that the memo prepared intended to say 'typically allowed' in the regional park system. He discussed numerous regional park examples in Minneapolis that have land area associated with them, as well as park-like amenities.

Kelly added the presentation noted support for this concept in the Regional Parks Policy Plan, to encourage agencies to explore activities and facilities that will help increase equitable access to regional trails.

Lovelee added that the Council, Commission, and staff have been thinking about how to make trails more inviting for bikers as well as walkers.

Chair Yarusso discussed amenities and activities proposed along trails.

Peichel stated he is still struggling to see 'regionalism' with some of the features listed and feel they're more appropriate to a city park, i.e. a skate park. Arvidson shared that the park board seeks to include a skate park along a regional trail. It will attract teens and young adults, an age demographic that has not been historically well served by our system. He stated this facility will be a regional draw. And the

regional trail is part of a network that provides ways for future visitors to get to the skate park. He felt the same could be said of other amenities recognized, i.e., pickleball.

Atlas-Ingebretson stated that the proposed facilities were identified during the engagement effort. And this park has a number of existing hardened spaces, that the proposal will redevelop/renew. This proposal is a matter of equity. It seeks to create gateways to connect residents with the regional parks system, something our Commission and Council have been working on for years.

Chair Yarusso asked how hard courts are treated in the system today? Mullin commented, generally speaking, tennis courts or ballfields are not included or funded through the Council. He also noted that the total percentage of space proposed for hardened surfaces is very small when considering the entire regional trail corridor.

Taylor discussed trail versus park and shared that this type of proposal reflects an evolution of our system.

Vandegrift responded to the skate park question that they've found amenities and priorities that identify youth are gateways to other parts of our system. She also discussed recent research findings that found amenities like these are a great way to bring youth into our parks.

Chair Yarusso discussed playgrounds and that most are a more 'hybrid' that are different than traditional playgrounds. Mullin stated we're still doing traditional playgrounds, and we are moving toward more nature-based play areas.

Chair Yarusso summarized two questions – should stuff like this exist, (who's using and where should it go) and also classification. He is concerned with our authorization statute from the legislature that talks about 'regional recreation open space', a.k.a. less developed. This is what gives him pause. He feels it's not necessarily for adding to the regional trail but more as a way to link to the regional trail.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked what is different in providing play spaces for kids 12 years and under, but not for 12 years and older.

Chair Yarusso felt that not all playgrounds designs should be included in the regional parks system.

Atlas-Ingebretson stated skate parks would serve underserved populations in our system.

Taylor asked are basketball courts currently included. Arvidson stated they are within the regional park boundary now. They are proposing expansion and to be counted and funded. He feels the benefits of those investments reach more people. He feels it's important to understand this shift in changing needs of the community.

Chair Yarusso asked, do visitors to these areas count and are these areas eligible for funding? He asked about other types of funding for local parks and if regional parks are eligible? Arvidson stated he was not sure. He noted he could have proposed parking lots for Shingle Creek, and they would be funded, and added that Shingle Creek has zero parking lots.

Chair Yarusso pointed out this is a small pot of money.

Kelly reviewed the proposed action.

It was motioned by Theisen and seconded by Taylor that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan, including the supplemental information provided in the "Clarification of Submittal of Shingle Creek Regional Trail Master Plan" letter dated September 2, 2020.
2. Require that Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, prior to initiating any new development of the regional trail corridor, send preliminary plans to the Environmental Services Assistant Manager at the Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division
3. Other Council Policies and Systems" section regarding stormwater, natural resources and solar.

Taylor asked if we are setting a precedent here that should be documented. Chair Yarusso referred the question to staff. Mullin responded that we're sorting through a complex regional trail. He said this master plan recommendation is specific to Shingle Creek Regional Trail. If another agency would like to make a similar proposal, they will need to go through a similar process as did the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

Theisen stated we asked Arvidson to come back and respond to our concerns. This proposal is what we asked for and we need to support it.

Moeller feels the equity valve of this proposal is outstanding. He worries about precedent but feels the equity dimensions outweigh this concern for him.

Peichel asked, are there any legal concerns for asking the Council to approve. Atlas-Ingebretson stated not at all.

Mullin agreed. If we thought there was a legal question regarding this proposal and the Council's role, we would have brought it to our Legal Department.

Chair Yarusso asked, have we heard any comments from other implementing agencies?

Atlas-Ingebretson stated this conversation is no different than those we've had about bridging facilities. She added, we have to evolve to this point and finds it exciting.

Secretary Dingle issued a roll call vote.

Aye – 6 (Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Taylor, Theisen, Yarusso)

Nay – 0

Abstention – 2 (Carter, Harris)

The motion was approved.

INFORMATION

Youth and Parks Research Findings and Recommendations - Sarah Gong, Ellie Hohulin, and Darcie Vandegrift

Hohulin and Gong introduced themselves and also Gunnar Carlson, Lucia Reagan, and Darcie Vandegrift. Gong began the presentation on research done connecting youth with the Regional Park System, as outlined in the materials provided. She discussed the process (how and why).

Hohulin discussed obstacles to park access outlined in the presentation.

Gong discussed findings outlined in the presentation provided.

Hohulin discussed deliverables of the research, as outlined in presentation, and discussed why this research matters. She reviewed three Council recommendations listed in the presentation. She also shared three recommendations for implementing agencies.

Moeller stated this was a wonderful presentation and job this group did.

Chair Yarusso stated he is interested in not describing people as 'inexperienced' and asked, what is a better way to express this. Gong stated this depends and there is not a one size fits all. She stated they found wording matters and especially to the youth.

Hohulin added they have heard from youth that shared their experiences outside of a regional park but related to the present experience.

Chair Yarusso related this to work done in reviewing master plans.

Public Comment and Engagement Update for the Draft Amendment to the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan - Tracey Kinney, Senior Planner and Emmett Mullin, Manager

Kinney and Mullin updated the Commission on the public comment and engagement process for the draft Amendment to the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan* as outlined in the presentation provided.

Moeller asked, how does one add comments. Kinney responded Commissioners may feel free to submit a comment via the website and noted that a link could be sent to Commission members.

REPORTS

Chair: Chair Yarusso noted that all Commissioners should have received a link to the October 19, 2020 CDC Meeting, that will include the public hearing on the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

Chair Yarusso stated there is still no bonding bill however they may be another special session.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Mullin reminded Commissioners that the public hearing will be 10/19/2020 as Chair Yarusso indicated and stated that it will be their first item on the agenda, right at 4:00 PM. He also gave a brief update on Washington County Legacy project and asked staff member Nicole Clapp to elaborate.

Clapp discussed the project at Lake Elmo Park Reserve including regional trail improvements.

Atlas-Ingebretson thanked everyone for their time and encouraged every to continue working to promote the Regional Parks System. She also stated she will reach out to Research staff on their outstanding presentation today.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary