

## Minutes of the

### SPECIAL METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Thursday, April 9, 2020

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

**Committee Members Absent:** None.

#### CALL TO ORDER

With a quorum being present via WebEx, Committee Chair Yarusso called the special meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:08 p.m. on Thursday, April 9, 2020.

#### OATH OF OFFICE

Commission Secretary Dingle issued the oath of office to each of the new Commission Members - Nate Rich and Lolita Davis Carter. New Commission Members were asked to sign and date the oath provided to them and send back to Secretary Dingle either by email or US Mail.

#### APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for approval the April 9, 2020 agenda. It was motioned by Moeller and seconded by Theisen to approve the agenda. **The agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the February 6, 2020 and March 5, 2020 meetings of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. It was motioned by Theisen and seconded by Chair Yarusso to approve both sets of minutes. With no discussion of either of the meeting minutes, Chair Yarusso asked if there were any opposed to approving the minutes. With no Commission Members opposed, both the February 6, 2020 and the March 5, 2020 minutes were approved.

#### PUBLIC INVITATION

Chair Yarusso noted that the Agenda posted on April 2, 2020 asked that anyone wishing to address the Commission should please email the Chair at [mposc@tonyyarusso.org](mailto:mposc@tonyyarusso.org). Chair Yarusso stated that he did not receive any emails. Chair Yarusso noted that if these MPOSC meetings continue in this format due to COVID19, anyone wishing to address the Commission on items not on the agenda should send an email to the address on the agenda at least 24 hour in advance and he will plan to read those during the Commission Meeting.

#### BUSINESS

##### **Pine Point Regional Park Master Plan – Tracey Kinney, Parks Planner**

Kinney gave a presentation on the Pine Point Regional Park Master Plan as outlined in the materials provided.

Kemery shared concerns regarding ADA accessibility and asked if there is any access to the lake. Connor Schaefer, Washington County stated that there is no current access. They are proposing canoe and kayak access to the lake that will be accessible to adaptive kayaks and canoes. This access is contingent on the approval of the boundary adjustment request that will be part of the 2020 System Additions process.

Kemery asked about the loop in the drawing and asked if it will go in first or is it all happening at the same time. Schaefer stated that there is a phasing plan that

goes with these recommendations. He stated the small watercraft launch and ADA accessible trail are part of Phase III of the development, contingent on available funding and boundary adjustment request.

Kemery asked if there are any ADA trail plans contingent on acquiring land. Schaefer said the loop will connect the parking lot with the trailhead and stated they are considering that for Phase I or II. He noted the Gateway Trail that runs through the park is ADA accessible now.

Kemery asked about whether the adventure park and kids play areas are accessible. Schaefer stated both family recreation areas are ADA accessible and new equipment being planned for the site will provide ADA access.

Kemery added there is a national movement to develop areas for autistic children, with sensory sensitivity, and offered his assistance with this type of planning. Schaefer stated this is a great point and will definitely be considered.

Leslie Perkins, Washington County, discussed ADA accessible trails and options for natural surfaces that will be accessible. Kemery noted there are several different types of materials that can be used. He stated the penetrometer is a tool that is used to measure surface firmness and stability. He offered his assistance on exploring options. Schaefer thanked him and stated he will follow-up offline.

Moeller asked why the proposed action omits the boundary adjustment and proposed acquisitions. Kinney noted that the boundary adjustment is a second part of this request, and it will be covered further with the System Additions information item later in this meeting.

Taylor asked about work done with Urban Roots and also the southern route and norther routes in the plan. Kinney discussed engagement done last fall with Urban Roots and the recommendations that they helped develop. She noted that Washington County implemented all of them through the proposed master plan.

Taylor posed the question - what makes a family drive 25 miles to a park. He stressed the need to look at proximity as a key element of equity and introducing the regional system to new users. Vandegrift noted that this one event was only a small part of the engagement done with Urban Roots and the Youth in Parks research project. She stated that staff are waiting to share the results of this study until it can be shared in person with the full research team.

Chair Yarusso asked about the bike trails and the term 'single track'. He felt the trails were wider. Schaefer stated there are both types of trails. As acquisitions become available some trails will be developed to be specific to mountain biking and single tracks, while others will be for other uses such as hiking.

Chair Yarusso asked if there is a bike trail to the campsites? Schaefer stated the blue trail (on the map shared in the PowerPoint) will be for equestrian campers. When possible, more sites would be made for bikes, however, these sites are rustic and will be available to a wide array of campers.

Chair Yarusso commented that the natural trails may not be good for bikes that are not mountain bikes. He is looking for safe/practical trails for regular bikes.

Schaefer discussed access from the Outing Lodge. He shared that these sites would be good as hike in sites.

Atlas-Ingebretson illuminated what the term 'equity washing' means and if there are concerns about holding engagement with underserved communities that are not in close proximity to this regional park. She asked whether there were underserved groups engaged that lived in closer proximity to the park. Taylor shared that there are groups closer that could have been engaged. He added that equity washing is when people talk about deep engagement but really do more check-the-box engagement. This is not what we want.

Mullin appreciated the comment and stated Council and agency staff are willing to continue their efforts to do authentic engagement as well as continue their learning.

Schaefer acknowledged all of the comments and agrees this is just a start. Washington County wants to do more and are willing to do more. He also discussed work done at the County Fair where they spoke to over 200 people and feel they connected with people from all walks of life. He also stated that they looked at 30- minute travel sheds and noted that Urban Roots is within the 30 minute “benchmark” of the “regional system”. He felt that the group were very excited to visit the park again soon.

Atlas-Ingebretson reiterated work that Washington County is doing and noted we are all in a learning place.

Harris made a motion and it was seconded by Peichel to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Pine Point Regional Park Master Plan without the boundary adjustment and proposed acquisitions.
2. Advise Washington County that the proposed boundary adjustment and 169.82-acres of acquisitions are contingent on its inclusion in the 2020 Policy Plan Amendment and will be reviewed and considered through the Systems Additions process.

Recording Secretary Dingle took a roll call vote.

Aye: 9 - Carter, Harris, Kemery, Moeller, Peichel, Rich, Taylor, Theisen, Yarusso

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

**The motion carried.**

## **INFORMATION**

### **System Additions Process Update – Colin Kelly, Parks Planning Analyst**

Kelly gave an update on the System Additions Process project as outlined in the materials provided.

Peichel asked if stewardship is included in the initial acquisition process. Kelly stated that it is.

Chair Yarusso asked if this is the only cost that we are required to state in the statutory requirement. Kelly stated he would have to check but he believes that is correct.

Taylor asked about bridging facilities and if we would look at age, ability, etc. Kelly stated he’s not sure but may have more insight after the meeting tomorrow and would share language with the Commission before finalizing.

Taylor stated he sees bridging facilities as a way to invest in programming and awareness building, to help address racial/ability/age inequities. Mullin discussed the draft Regional Parks Policy Plan language that is being developed, to better clarify the purpose behind these facilities. The siting location and the intention behind the bridging facility is critical to reduce the inequities that exist.

The Commission reviewed the two discussion questions in the presentation.

Chair Yarusso offered a few things to think about how we are using our role in this process to provide regional guidance? He asked the Commission to consider if/whether there is anything we should be looking at, for instance, geographic balance, equity, etc.

### **Parks Research Update – Darcie Vandegrift, Parks Research Analyst**

Vandegrift gave a parks research update as outlined in the materials provided. She noted that due to COVID-19, the 2020 Use Estimate has been canceled so 2019 estimates will be used. She added that the 2020 Visitor Study (done approximately every 5 years) has been post-pones until 2021. Therefore, multipliers from 2016 will be used again this year.

Chair Yarusso clarified that the use estimate's statutory language states that we will use the most recent estimate. He noted that putting off the Visitor Study to 2021 will still be within the 5-year goal. He also felt that data may have been skewed if the study proceeded this summer due to COVID-19.

**Parks and Trails Legacy Funding Work Group Update** - Emmett Mullin, Manager Regional Parks and Natural Resources

Mullin gave an update on the Parks and Trails Legacy Funding Work Group as outlined in the presentation provided.

There were no questions from the Commission.

## REPORTS

**Chair:** Chair Yarusso welcome the two new Commission members and thanked everyone for meeting electronically during these trying times.

**Commissioners:** None.

**Staff:** Mullin thanked everyone for participating today. He stated staff are closely watching the impacts of COVID-19. He also commended the work of all ten implementing agencies, keeping their parks and trails open to the public during these difficult times is critical.

Mullin discussed the heavy use of our trails during this time.

Mullin reported that the Legislative session is still on, but they are meeting infrequently.

Mullin stated that the Council is renewing its MRPA membership and will be extending member benefits to MPOSC Commissioners, as well as Council Member Atlas-Ingebretson.

Mullin discussed a recommendation will be brought to this Commission regarding interest earnings and that a recommendation will be coming to use a portion of that funding for the second round of the Equity Grant Program.

Atlas-Ingebretson shared her 'kudos' to all implementing agencies and staff. This has been a tremendous shift in operations and its implications will be felt for a while. She shared her appreciation for everyone's efforts. She then welcomed the two new members and wished everyone the best health.

## ADJOURNMENT

Business completed the meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Sandi Dingle  
Recording Secretary