

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting Date: February 2, 2023

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Steet

Members Present:

Chair, Tony Yarusso,
At-large

Monica Dillenburg, District A

Robert Moeller, District B

Cana Yang, District C

Vacant, District D

Jeremy Peichel, District E

Cecily Harris, District F

Anthony Taylor, District G

Todd Kemery, District H

Susan Vento, Council Liaison

= present

Call to Order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:01 pm.

Agenda Approved

Chair Yarusso asked for a consensus on the Agenda. Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. **Agenda was approved.**

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Peichel, seconded by Harris to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2023 regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public Invitation

None.

Business

1. **2023-37:** Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (Collin Kelly, Parks Planning Analyst)

Kelly gave a presentation on the Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Long-Range Plan Amendment brought forward by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, as outlined in the materials provided.

Peichel asked for clarification on the meaning of the asterisk on page 12. Pederson Pederson, MPRB stated it was a left-over piece of text from a previous document and a typo. The asterisk indicates agencies represented on the Citizens Advisory Committee. He noted that some school organizations choose not to appoint someone.

Harris asked if the golf course area is eligible for Met Council funding? Kelly noted that some of the changes proposed for this space are intended to be part of the regional parks system and as such are eligible for regional funding. Activities related to the golf course are not eligible for regional funding.

Harris stated she sincerely hopes the golf course itself is not eligible for Met Council funding.

Chair Yarusso asked if enterprise facilities excluded from visitor counts? Kelly stated that golf course enterprise facilities are excluded from visit counts; he noted that the new proposed design concept could propose some challenges to the use estimate because of the sometimes overlapping uses of the proposed new space. Pederson added that this arrangement is not new to the park board and seconded that golfers would not be part of the regional estimate.

Chair Yarusso stated the tricky part falls on estimating acreage and how to do this. Kelly stated we are in the midst of GIS improvement project where we are looking into these topics.

Mullin discussed how the Council works closely with implementing agencies when doing the use estimate and he is confident they will come up with an acceptable approach that will be amenable to both parties.

Pederson discussed the new community space and noted that all visitors will be welcome in this space including golfers and park visitors. He mentioned that Park Board's desire to elevate cross-country skiing at the park.

Pederson thanked the Commission for the great questions, and said the Park Board wants to blend the future uses of the space and find balance. There will be many more conversations on how to fine tune the design. He discussed two buildings being proposed – one clubhouse and one with more community spaces.

Harris referred to page 16 in the packet and asked about herbicides and pesticides getting into restored wetlands and how it will be managed. Pederson stated that the new design intentionally brings more nature into the golf course spaces. While chemicals are necessary on the course, they will be used less than earlier practices, with a desire to continue to reduce use going forward.

Taylor discussed the possibility of an 'organic' golf course. Pederson likes the idea and staff have investigated doing something like this, however, they need to weigh this approach against golfer expectations for the condition of the facility.

Dillenburg asked if profits from the golf course could help pay for regional park amenities, like cross country skiing?

Vento asked about engagement with the schools. Pederson noted they did have 1-2 golf coaches involved with this process. They invited other school golf programs to participate on the Citizen Advisory Committee. They want to make connections to schools for programming that supports education. Vento encouraged this future work with schools.

It was moved by Peichel, seconded by Dillenburg, that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park Long Range Plan Amendment.
2. Require Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, prior to initiating any project at this location, to send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Interceptor Engineering Assistant Manager.

Peichel asked whether we could do more upcoming Regional Parks Policy Plan update with bridging facilities, to help further ideas explored in this plan.

Harris offered a friendly amendment to encourage sustainable practices of course maintenance. Peichel stated the motion is a recommendation to the Met Council, not the MPRB, so he did not accept it. Pederson stated they will advocate for this practice.

Taylor asked how we could make this recommendation to the MPRB? Chair Yarusso stated it could be made in a separate motion.

Pederson noted that the golf course is not the sole source of contributors of pesticides and herbicides at the golf course. He discussed Minnehaha Creek watershed, which flows through a lot of urban and suburban areas, wetlands, and other golf courses. While the Park Board



will explore a more organic approach at the course, he noted that these other contributors are the larger contributors to water quality issues at the course. He reiterated that they will look into minimizing impacts to the environment.

Chair Yarusso asked about the change to a 9-hole course and concerns about equity because of its rich history of a course that welcomes persons of color.

Taylor discussed areas MPRB could increase equity for users and feels African American golfers do not feel served by this proposal. He discussed ways MPRB could help the community, particularly the African American golfers to feel whole. Chair Yarusso stated this could be an opportunity for a future equity grant.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote on the motion. **Motion carried.**

Information

1. Equity Nudge: Anoka County Augmented Reality Equity Grant Update (Amanda Lovelee, Regional Park Ambassador; Karen Blaska and Nicole Greenwell, Anoka County Parks)

Nicole Greenwell, Anoka County Parks gave a presentation on Anoka County's augmented reality trail program funded through an Regional Parks System equity grant as outlined in the materials provided. She reviewed how the app interface works.

Chair Yarusso asked if you can download the app ahead of time. Greenwell stated yes and noted they will also have two iPads available for checkout at Bunker Hills Regional Park.

Chair Yarusso asked about translating the content. Greenwell stated that this may be something their vendor could work into the app, and she will follow up.

Chair Yarusso stated as a digital platform, this app could potentially be used at other parks and with other agencies agencies. Karen Blaska, Anoka County Parks, affirmed.

Vento encouraged outreach with older visitors and feels it would be a great activity for them.

Harris commented on audio tours that are so popular and encouraged the agency to add a history track, or something like that. Peichel added, to this idea to explore park podcasts.

Greenwell discussed expansion of this program and having 2-3 trails in each park.

Reports

1. Chair

Chair Yarusso reiterated that there will be new commissioners coming in and we hope to have them named by our March meeting. He also reminded commission members that renewal of ENRTF is needed and encouraged members to contact their legislators in support of this.

2. Committee Members

Harris stated that Washington County is holding engagement sessions on the Middle Saint Croix Regional Trail and the 4th engagement session will be held at the end of February.

3. Council Liaison

None.

4. Staff

Mullin stated the legislative session is ongoing and there's a lot going on. He noted the Governor's proposal of \$2.5 million increase for Operations and Maintenance. He discussed the park agency's related bills. He also stated that the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund 40-40-20 agreement has been introduced by the Governor.

Mullin stated the Governor recommends \$3 million for Regional Parks Bonding Program, to



be matched with \$2 million from the Council. Also, the Governor has introduced a \$12 million recommendation for the “Modernization” of our Regional Parks and Trails System, and noted that the Council will match this amount with \$8 million in Council funds.

Mullin stated we have fact sheets that he can send out that explains all of the Governor’s proposals.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting of February 2, 2023.

Approved this 2nd day of March 2023.

Council Contact:

Sandi Dingle, Recording Secretary
Sandi.Dingle@metc.state.mn.us
651-602-1312

