

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: October 5, 2023

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

Chair, Tony Yarusso,
at large

Monica Dillenburg, District A

Robert Moeller, District B

Cana Yang, District C

Tess Bouska, District D

Vacant, District E

Cecily Harris, District F

Anthony Taylor, District G

Vacant, District H

Susan Vento, Council Liaison

= present, E = excused

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 4:01pm.

Agenda

Chair Yarusso asked if there were any changes to the October 5, 2023 agenda. Hearing none, the agenda was approved by consensus.

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Moeller to approve the minutes of the August 3, 2023, regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

No one requested to address the Commission.

Business

1. **2023-238:** Regional Parks System Equity Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability (Emmett Mullin)

Mullin noted that Jessica Lee was no longer with the Met Council. In her absence, he gave a presentation on the Regional Parks System Equity Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked, have we asked the implementing agencies (IA's) to partner with non-agencies. Mullin responded that we do encourage the IA's to partner with other community agencies.

Harris suggested projects could address more than one outside community agency to create equity.

Vento asked about collaboration among the 10 agencies and asked the IA's to consider programs that engage with schools as well as the 50+ adult population.

Chair Yarusso discussed partnerships with government agencies versus non-government agencies.

Moeller asked, do we have an auditing process for funds that have been dispersed. Mullin

responded that we do have auditing. He wasn't sure if this program had been audited yet because this program is relatively new.

Chair Yarusso discussed two types of auditing. 1 – was the money spent legally and 2 – did the intent of the money reach its goal. He noted this may be something we need to discuss further at a future meeting.

Vento suggested the IA's do a "lessons learned" list that other agencies could utilize.

Chair Yarusso stated we may not see results for several years. It may be good to ask next year about projects funded 5 years ago.

Mullin noted there is an outreach group that meets monthly to discuss what's working and what could be better.

Chair Yarusso asked about grant extensions and funding sources as they apply to 'use it or lose it'. Mullin stated extensions are done at the grant level. Regarding funding sources, he explained that capital or bonding needs to be spent within the grant term.

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Harris, to recommend that the Metropolitan Council authorize the 2024 Regional Parks and Trails System Competitive Equity Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability attached to this report.

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

2. **2023-239:** West Mississippi River Regional Trail, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund (Laurel), Three Rivers Park District (Emmett Mullin)

Mullin gave a presentation on a trail acquisition opportunity fund request for the West Mississippi River Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

Dillenburg asked if the land is adjacent to properties already owned by Three Rivers? Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District stated they've purchased six properties so far and noted they only work with willing sellers. The current adjacent properties are privately owned. A nearby opportunity is coming up for purchase in the near future.

It was moved by Moeller, seconded by Dillenburg, to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve a grant of up to \$431,250 to Three Rivers Park District to acquire a 1.98-acre parcel located at 16350 Dayton River Road in Dayton, MN, for the West Mississippi River Regional Trail.
2. Authorize the Community Development Director to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

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

Information

1. Administrative Process for Minor Long-Range Plan Amendments (Emmett Mullin and Tracey Kinney)

Mullin and Kinney gave a presentation on a proposal to create an administrative process for approving minor, routine, long-range plan amendments, as outlined in the materials provided.

Dillenburg is all for saving time and likes the administrative process criteria shared by staff.

Chair Yarusso discussed the monetary piece and asked for more commissioner feedback on the monetary piece. Should we have something in the process if it could have an impact on the estimated cost to complete the system?

Moeller felt there should be some kind of financial element or ceiling to the process. He discussed the proposal and asked if there is a change to the original master plan cost estimate, if it is significant, then should it be brought to the Commission?

Mullin stated using a percentage may be too 'slippery'. A dollar threshold would be clearer.

Chair Yarusso agreed that \$100,000 is too low and suggested 5 times the cost for an average acre of land. This can then be adjusted every 5 years when updating the Regional Parks Policy Plan.

Moeller stated he likes the idea of streamlining the process.

Chair Yarusso discussed the Commission's role in stewardship and restrictive covenants. He felt any removal of land restrictions should come through the Commission.

Mullin noted staff will come back with a proposal for how this will look in the 2024 Regional Parks Policy Plan.

Reports

1. Chair - None
2. Committee Members

Harris reported that she met with Washington County Public Works to look at Glacial Hills Regional Trail.

3. Council Liaison - None
4. Staff

Mullin introduced three new Parks staff. Intern – Brooklyn Climer; Associate Parks Ambassador – Jenessa Carlisle; and he noted the Ellie Hohulin is back to help with the project to infuse art into the Regional Development Guide.

Mullin noted that District D, E, and H are still vacant.

He also stated that Jessica's position has been posted. Chee's position will be posted shortly. They are also looking at hiring a trail planner.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:30 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 October 5, 2023.

Approved this 02 day of November 2023.

Council contact:

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