

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

Committee Members Present:

Tony Yarusso, Rick Theisen, Robert Moeller, Todd Kemery, Sarah Hietpas, Margie Andreason, and Wendy Wulff, Council Liaison

Committee Members Absent:

Anthony Taylor, Michael Kopp

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Yarusso called the meeting of the Council's Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 4, 2017.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the Agenda of the Meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Andreason motioned and it was seconded by Moeller to approve the agenda. The **Agenda was approved.**

Chair Yarusso asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2017 meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. Theisen motioned and it was seconded by Andreason to approve the minutes. The **Minutes were approved.**

PUBLIC INVITATION

None.

BUSINESS

2017-76, Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park Master Plan and Consent to Easement, Washington County - Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst

Youngquist gave a presentation on the Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park Master Plan and Consent to Easement requested from Washington County as outlined in the materials provided.

It was motioned by Theisen, seconded by Kemery to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park Master Plan.
2. Inform Washington County that a master plan amendment which includes the location and estimated development costs for the proposed adventure course must be approved by the Council prior to implementation of the project.
3. Require Washington County to submit to the Council the future forest restoration plan for the stormwater conveyance project area and erosion study of the east ravine that are referenced in the master plan, upon completion of these documents.
4. Consent to Washington County granting a drainage and stormwater ponding easement to the South Washington Watershed District as shown in Attachment 1, subject to the Council's receipt of an executed Operation and Maintenance Agreement between Washington County and the South Washington Watershed District.

Moeller asked if Washington County has signed off on this. Youngquist stated that Washington County approved the master plan and will approve the easement contingent on the Metropolitan Council approval.

Moeller asked if the goats were successful in removing the buckthorn. Dan MacSwain, Washington County Parks stated that the goats were a huge hit and increased visitation to the park significantly. They plan to continue to use them in the future but would like to reduce costs. They are also looking at leasing goats.

Moeller asked about the success of the buckthorn remediation. MacSwain stated that they have learned much from the process and feel that using them for maintenance grazing going forward would be more beneficial.

Chair Yarusso asked about impacts to Bailey Lake and its water levels. Connor Schaefer, Washington County Parks responded that there is no natural continuous outlet for Bailey Lake and noted that Cottage Grove and Woodbury need to create the outlet in order to manage water levels.

Chair Yarusso asked how often does the County anticipate flooding and how often will the Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park flood? Grant Wyffels, Washington County Parks, stated that Bailey Lake has capacity to handle overflow during 100-year flood events but not if they are back-to-back events. In that case, the water would need to be pumped to Ravine Lake and ultimately it will drain to the Mississippi River. They do not anticipate it to happen frequently but there is no way to predict these types of rain events.

Chair Yarusso asked if the DNR has evaluated how the increased flow will affect the fishery of Ravine Lake. Youngquist stated that the DNR was involved in this plan and commented on the Environmental Assessment that was done but cannot say for sure if they have considered this question.

Chair Yarusso asked about oak wilt and if the County will be monitoring the impacts to the trees long enough to determine oak wilt (which can take years). Wyffels discussed the plan to avoid the effects of oak wilt during construction. Post construction, monitoring will go on for 4 years. He added that newly planted trees will have a 5-year warranty. He discussed other reforestation efforts that will be done as well.

Chair Yarusso asked about the timeframe and maturity level of replacement trees? MacSwain stated they designed the plan with mature trees in mind, and noted that it is hard to know how quickly trees will mature.

Chair Yarusso clarified that he is wondering how long will it take until the forest looks like it wasn't impacted. MacSwain stated that the project was designed to minimize impacts.

Theisen asked if this project is being done to accommodate the increased need for development. Wyffels stated that Ravine Lake has an outlet to the river and this area drains a fairly large watershed. He discussed that this project is a win/win for the cities within the watershed and for the park, as it deals with challenging erosion issues. He noted that the Bailey Lake overflow (central draw facility) is designed for further growth but not for back-to-back mega-storms.

Kemery clarified that the 72" pipe is empty when there's no event. Wyffels confirmed.

Hietpas asked what the central draw storage facility is. Wyffels stated that it is a 250-acre natural low-lying area. When Bailey Lake is flooded, the water is then pumped to this area. During back to back major rain events, when there is not enough time for the water to naturally recede, it will then be pumped into the pipe that will lead to Ravine Lake and from there it will drain to the river.

Hietpas asked about the project funding including the road improvements. Wyffels described the three segments of the project and cost sharing that will be done and led by Washington County.

Hietpas asked if the County is seeking reimbursement for this project? Wyffels stated no, however, they would seek reimbursements for the future for park improvement projects, i.e., the new playground.

Hietpas asked about the status of the land exchange with the City of Cottage Grove. Youngquist stated that the city and county were working together to meet the terms of the agreement, and had reviewed the inholdings to be acquired in the near future.

Chair Yarusso clarified that the land exchanges need to occur prior to 2022, not just be included in the park boundary. Youngquist confirmed.

Kemery asked about accessibility in the play area and possible adventure course. Schaefer stated that this is a priority and will be considered as the design process moves forward.

Kemery discussed trail slopes and noted that while 8% is compliant, it can be difficult for manual wheelchair users. He suggested that they stay to 5% or have a flat area to be able to stop and rest periodically.

Chair Yarusso asked which of the trail loops would be accessible. Wyffels stated that this park has many steep slopes. Kemery stated they just need to have a comparable portion and noted that the entire park does not need to be accessible. Wyffels noted that there is a current trail that goes from one end of the park to the other at this time that is accessible. He stated that they have received some feedback that there needs to be some realignment of trails.

Kemery stated that he likes that fees are not assessed to walk-in users and asked if there is a trail that connects to this park. Schaefer replied that there is a trail that connects to the Cottage Grove Service Center and there are also plans for a regional trail that will connect to Lake Elmo and Big Marine Regional Parks in the future.

Chair Yarusso reviewed the motion on the floor and called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

2017-77 Land Exchange and Boundary Amendment for Rice Creek West Regional Trail, Anoka County – Jan Youngquist, Planning Analyst

Youngquist gave a presentation on a request from Anoka County for a land exchange and boundary amendment for Rice Creek West Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

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

1. Approve a land exchange between Anoka County and the City of Fridley that exchanges 1.8 acres of regional parkland at the Rice Creek West Regional Trail for 1.9 acres of City-owned land adjacent to the trail corridor as described in Attachment 1 and depicted in Attachment 2.

2. Approve a master plan boundary amendment to the Rice Creek West Regional Trail corridor that removes 1.8 acres and adds the adjacent 1.9 acres as depicted in Attachment 2, adds trailhead parking, and shifts the trail alignment approximately 100 feet south of its current location as depicted in Attachment 3.
3. Require that the City of Fridley ensure that an easement of acceptable width to Anoka County for the relocated regional trail alignment is granted at no cost to Anoka County.
4. Determine that the costs associated with relocation of the Rice Creek West Regional Trail are not eligible for regional parks funding from the Council.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

2017-78 Future Reimbursement Consideration for Coon Creek Regional Trail, Anoka County –
Deb Jensen, Senior Parks Finance Planner

Jensen gave a presentation on a request from Anoka County for a future reimbursement consideration for Coon Creek Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

It was motioned by Hietpas, seconded by Kemery to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Consider reimbursing Anoka County up to \$175,000 from its share of a future Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program for costs it incurs to build a segment of the Coon Creek Regional Trail along Egret Boulevard in the City of Coon Rapids; and
2. Inform Anoka County that the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that it will reimburse Anoka County and that expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

Theisen asked if this will complete the trail. Jensen responded that this is a portion of the final mile.

Chair Yarusso called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

REPORTS

Chair: Yarusso stated that there was a new Master Plan open house for Lake Byllesby and they are taking comments online through April 9, 2017.

Yarusso stated that Dakota County is updating their Natural Resources Management System Plan and are having an open house regarding it at Lebanon Hills Regional Park on 4/13/17.

Yarusso stated they will be opening a new segment of the Mississippi River Trail through Spring Lake Park Reserve with a grand opening on 5/20/17.

Yarusso discussed new meeting dates due to holidays and election day as follows: 7/4/17 will move to 7/11/17; 9/5/17 will move to 9/12/17; and 11/7/17 will move to 11/14/17. He asked that a reminder note regarding the changed dates be sent out.

Commissioners: Kemery was invited by the City of Orono to be part of a Big Island Meeting. He noted that Orono had bought the island from the Paralyzed Veterans of America. They are interested in keeping this a Veteran's Retreat. He stated that over the past 8-10 years' vandals have damaged buildings and the city is exploring what it would take to restore the island. A Committee has convened to look at this complex issue.

Staff: Mullin reported the Secretary of State Office has posted the vacancy in District G and stated that staff hope to conduct interviews at the end of April.

Mullin gave an update on the Legislative Session.

Mullin discussed summer tours and asked if there are any areas that Commissions would like to see. Yarusso suggested reaching out to the IA's if there are areas that they'd like to showcase.

Mullin noted that the Commission typically does 2-3 tours a summer. Moeller stated he would like three.

ADJOURNMENT

6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle
Recording Secretary