

Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



Meeting date: June 6, 2024

Time: 4:00 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

Chair, Tony Yarusso,
at large

Monica Dillenburg, District A

Robert Moeller, District B

Tess Bouska, District C

David Yakes, District D

Chris Suerig, District E

Cecily Harris, District F

Anthony Taylor, District G

Amanda Duerr, 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.

Agenda approved

Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. Agenda approved.

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Moeller, seconded by Suerig to approve the minutes of the May 2, 2024, regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

None.

Business

1. **2024-140:** Vermillion River Greenway Regional Trail (Hastings), Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award (Dakota County Community Development Agency), Dakota County – Jessica Lee

Lee gave a presentation on a request from Dakota County for a grant to acquire land for the Vermillion River Greenway Regional Trail in Hastings as outlined in the materials provided.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$112,973 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Dakota County to acquire a 5-acre parcel located at 160th Street East and Pleasant Avenue in Hastings, MN, for the Vermillion River Greenway Regional Trail (Hastings).
2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

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

2. **2024-141:** West Mississippi River Regional Trail, Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Award (Rife), Three Rivers Park District – Jessica Lee

Lee gave a presentation on a request from Three Rivers Park District for a grant to acquire

land for the West Mississippi River Regional Trail as outlined in the materials provided.

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

1. Approve a grant of up to \$431,250 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Three Rivers Park District to acquire a 5.5-acre parcel located at 142nd Avenue in Dayton, MN, for the West Mississippi River Regional Trail.
2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

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

3. **2024-149:** Annual Metropolitan Regional Parks Operation & Maintenance Allocation – Aimee Junget

Junget gave a presentation on the annual Metropolitan Regional Parks Operation and Maintenance allocation as required by State Statute and is outlined in the materials provided.

Harris asked if there is any other reporting done to track Agency Operations and Maintenance work. Junget stated that this high-level summary report is required by the State Legislature, however, the implementing agencies do very extensive reporting on expenditures. Nicole Clapp stated this is a reimbursement program for Operations and Maintenance expenditures and it only reimburses a small portion of what Agencies spend on this work.

Dillenburg asked when inflation drives costs up, how is the shortfall handled? Clapp stated annual Operations and Maintenance allocations are determined by the Legislature. Reaching out to them may be the best way to get funding increased.

It was moved by Moeller, seconded by Yakes, that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission reports to the Metropolitan Council the Regional Parks and Trails System state fiscal year (SFY) 2025 Operations and Maintenance Funding requests.]

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

Information

1. Draft 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Information Item (Colin Kelly, Tracey Kinney, Kevin Phan)

Kelly, Kinney, and Phan gave a presentation on the latest updates to the draft 2050 Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan as outlined in the materials provided.

Harris discussed the need to use consistent language in document, for example, referencing Native Americans as American Indians and Indigenous people. Pick one term. Be consistent.

Harris discussed the requirement that 40% of visitors need to be non-local visitors and asked how this is tracked. Mullin discussed that the Council conducts an every-five-year visitor study, that looks at park use, needs, desires, and where people come from and whether they are local or non-local visitors. Harris asked whether a regional park has ever been 'demoted' from regional parks status if that requirement is not met. Chair Yarusso stated that is not something we currently do but is something this Commission could look at.

Harris discussed public engagement and how groups are referenced in categories 60 years old and older and then also 65+. She feels consistency is important.

Harris noted that on page 28, the first paragraph, first sentence, ends with 'as long as need can be demonstrated' and asked how this is measured. She feels it's vague and may be better off removed.

Harris discussed the cultural resources study and stated she likes this proposal and asked if there's a standard for what's being counted. Kelly responded he would be glad to investigate this question.

Moeller liked the direction for climate resiliency and renewable energy and asked if we are



encouraging the implementing agencies or measuring what's being done. Phan discussed actions being proposed to see where the Council can help support these efforts.

Dillenburg stated she likes the metrics proposal, and she discussed water and waterways and our ability to measure them in the Parks Plan? She also discussed natural resource restoration and tree planting/replanting, and asked if we support planting trees, how are we committed to helping maintain them. She discussed historical landscapes and the new cultural landscape classification, and how to effectively recognize culture.

Chair Yarusso discussed water resources and groundwater recharge. He stated our system provides support for these important ecological functions. Mullin discussed the Water Resources Policy Plan, and work being done by Environmental Services in this area.

Yakes asked about native plants and how we encourage their restoration and protection. Kelly noted that the handbook discusses this level of information and requirements, but typically the implementing agencies are responsible for this level of detail.

Chair Yarusso noted that category icons should be made accessible to speech reader software.

Chair Yarusso asked members to look at the section on bridging facilities. He also noted on page 27, the plan talks about joint powers agreements, when they are needed, and he asked members to look at this section as well.

Chair Yarusso noted to staff, when we're talking about climate protection we need to talk more about public transit to parks.

Mullin discussed dropping the term 'Recreation' from the classification 'Special Recreation Features', to ensure that our new proposed subclassifications around Cultural Landscapes and Historical Landscapes will fit (as these may or may not also include recreation). There was recognition that these new classifications could be identified at the unit level or even as a "sub-unit".

Chair Yarusso discussed timelines and next steps. Kelly stated that the Regional Parks and Trails Policy Plan's 90% draft will be shared in August as well as the Regional Parks and Trails Planning Handbook.

Moeller asked about the reaction of the implementing agencies and if they are with us on these proposed changes. Mullin stated they are tracking this process very carefully, they have provided detailed suggestions, and they are very engaged and supportive.

Reports

1. Chair

Chair Yarusso noted that the Commission will be meeting on Thursday, July 11, 2024, due to the July 4th holiday falling on the first Thursday.

2. Committee Members

Harris noted that there will be a public meeting on Glacial Hills Regional Trail on June 17, 2024, at Marine Village Hall. She also noted that St. Paul is having a Party in the Park at Como and has a flyer if anyone is interested in joining her.

3. Council Liaison

Council Member Vento was unable to attend due to illness, however sent a message to be shared. The Equity Grant recommendation was approved by the Metropolitan Council, and she wanted to convey that Council Members wished to express their gratitude for the work of this Commission in reviewing and recommending these important projects.

4. Staff - Mullin gave a Legislative update on parks initiatives: The Legislature and Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources allocated \$3 million for phase eight of the



Metropolitan Regional Parks System Land Acquisition program, matched with \$3.67 million from regional and local funds. The Parks and Trails Legacy Fund received \$3.623 million in new funds for fiscal year 2025, continuing the 40-40-20 split among the Met Council, Department of Natural Resources, and Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails. A new requirement mandates a one-time report on free or reduced-rate activity opportunities in regional parks. The omnibus environment and natural resources supplemental budget bill includes \$3.188 million for a newly established community tree planting grant program, \$1.4 million for tree planting in the regional parks and trails system, and \$500,000 for fishing piers in metro parks.

Mullin introduced new interns.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:25 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 June 6, 2024.

Approved this 11th day of July 2024.

Council contact:

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