

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
390 N. Robert Street, St. Paul, MN 55101

SPECIAL MEETING OF
METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION
February 13, 2007

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Glen Skovholt, Michael Rainville, Barb Schmidt, Richard Jabs, Gary Botzek, Lars Erdahl, Daniel Shlaferman, Robert Wicklund

ABSENT: Emily Barbeau, Natalie Steffen, Metropolitan Council Liaison to the Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Skovholt called the meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:10 p.m. on February 13, 2007. This meeting had been rescheduled from the February 6, 2007 meeting, which was canceled due to poor weather conditions.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA & MINUTES

Commissioner Schmidt motioned to approve the February 13, 2007 agenda and the January 9, 2007 minutes. Commissioner Jabs seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

PUBLIC INVITATION: Invitation to Interested Persons to Address the Commission on Matters Not on the Agenda (Each speaker is limited to a five-minute presentation.)

None.

BUSINESS:

2007 Work Plan for the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission - Glen Skovholt, Chair, Beckman prefaced that this is not an item for adoption and that it has been presented to the Community Development Committee. She noted that it is intended for use as a guideline.

Skovholt talked about how it was developed and went through the policy implementation portion. He noted that there may be more items added in the future.

Rainville suggested adding a bullet point documenting that we intend to 'continue consideration of changing the structure of the CIP'.

Discussion on 2008-2013 Regional Parks CIP Structure - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferud discussed the January 14 memo distributed with the packet.

Stefferud discussed basic issues in structuring the CIP.

- How should projects be ranked and appropriations for the Parks CIP distributed?
- What should be the basis for determining a park agency's share in the Parks CIP?

Stefferud discussed ranking CIP projects and distributing appropriations, as well as percent proposed vs. percent received of 2006 CIP appropriation.

Stefferud discussed suggested changes to the distribution of CIP appropriations as well as benefits of distributing CIP appropriations based on an agency's share of the CIP. He also discussed the basis for determining a park agency's share of the CIP and bias of current CIP agency share factors. He discussed the suggestion to change where the benefits of the CIP agency's share is based on population. He also compared proposed vs. what agency's got and total funds appropriated by the Legislature.

In conclusion, Stefferud summarized that an agency CIP share based on population and distributing CIP funds based on that share on agency prioritized list is:

- Consistent with applicable law
- Ensures equal per capita spending
- Funds highest agency priorities
- Allows non-CIP funds to complement CIP funds

Stefferd noted that the MPOSC needs to consider a new structure for the CIP by the end of May, so that requests can be made to the Department of Finance by mid-June. The Council would need to act on the new structure in May; therefore this group should make their recommendation by the beginning of May.

Skovholt asked for discussion of Commission Members.

Erdahl clarified that we would be eliminating the Council's process of ranking projects and therefore would drastically simplify the process and allow the implementing agencies to implement their priority projects. Stefferud noted that is correct.

Erdahl then noted that the Commission has talked several times about land acquisition, especially in outlying areas where the populations are lower and stated that we need to, in some way, ensure that we take advantage of opportunities to acquire land, i.e., through acquisition opportunity grants. Stefferud noted that the acquisition opportunity grants is a separate 'pot of money' available to all of the implementing agencies on an as needed basis.

Schmidt stated that there is precedence for this. In the early years there was a segment of the CIP that was based on agency priorities. She feels the time to make the change in the CIP structure is now. A portion of the CIP, in the past, left prioritization of how funds were used to the agencies.

Wicklund stated he likes leaving the decision of how money is spent to who is doing the spending. He also noted that this helps define 'the battlefield'. It's no longer about whether we're emphasizing acquisition or redevelopment, but rather how do we determine the shares. Wicklund discussed the idea of 'per capita' and noted that we need to revisit the land acquisition opportunity fund and the way it is administered because IA's with less population won't get as much money.

Skovholt stated that a designated amount of the CIP could be put into a land acquisition fund. Stefferud stated that we could do this and noted that reimbursement for buying land needs to be part of the CIP.

Botzek asked if there is more money in the Governor's budget for North Mississippi Grants. Stefferud gave a history of North Mississippi Grants, which are required by statute. He noted that any interests earned on parks bonds are to be used to buy land and develop North Mississippi Regional Park.

Schmidt asked how much money is going into North Mississippi. Stefferud stated that it is now less than \$100,000/year however; cumulatively it has been about 12 million dollars, since 1986.

Rainville stated that when we talk about population of a park district, they should include visitors. He also noted, regarding land acquisition, costs in urban areas is very expensive and differs greatly from the rural areas.

Skovholt offered a couple of ideas to be thinking about. The first, could the result of this be that agencies will submit more and more individual requests? Then, we need to tackle the issue of reimbursements to agencies. Finally, could we take a request to the Legislature without line item amounts for projects? Stefferud responded that we used to request funds in the way Skovholt proposed, but in 1994 the Legislature asked "if we don't give you 'x' amount, what won't get done?" He stated he feels that the Legislature wants details.

Schmidt clarified that in the case of an agency using the money for another park, the reimbursement won't look like a reimbursement; it will look like a new project. Stefferud agreed.

Skovholt asked for input from the implementing agencies.

Greg Mack, Ramsey County Parks and Recreation stated that they have discussed some of these concepts; however, he suggested that agencies have more time to discuss. One area of concern he feels will be a challenge will be in land acquisition. He stated that if the LCCMR continues in the course they are on, looking at acquisition as a priority, that has essentially eliminated 1/3 of their capital funding. This used to be part of 'the mix'. He felt that in any kind of percentage allocation by agency, if there is 100% funding for land acquisition, that should be part of the formula (when you look at agency distributions). He gave an example that if an agency is scheduled to get 10% of the total biennial appropriation, and they have acquisition that represents 3-4% of that, should that 3-4% be counted against the 10%? These are some of the things Mack suggested that the agencies need to sit down and discuss with each other and Council staff. He noted that a more predictable formula would be a benefit to the agencies.

Jon Gurban, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, stated he likes what is being proposed and noted that predictability and simplification is key. He would advocate for consideration to user visits as well as population to be a factor in the formula. He noted that their system as two components – the regional park system and neighborhood park system. He made the Commission aware that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is looking at not allowing the regional park system to take money from their neighborhood park system.

Steve Sullivan, Dakota County Parks and Recreation stated that he thinks the distribution formula needs to be looked at and feels it is not contemporary – it tends to be focused on mature agencies. He agreed with Mack that the loss of LCCMR dollars needs to be considered. He talked about other ways to bring more dollars to the CIP in regards to acquisition.

Jody Martinez, City of St. Paul Parks and Recreation agreed with most of the proposals, however felt that looking at population without user visits does not serve the regional parks. She stated this would work for local parks, but regional parks are used by so many more than just the local population.

Rainville asked how many visits were there to Como Park last year. Stefferud noted there are about 2 million visits per year. He acknowledged that you have to balance the visitation argument with the fact that there is population that is growing in the region, were there wasn't before. Per capita spending helps do this. Schmidt noted that visitation has a bigger impact in the operation and maintenance distribution - not in the CIP distribution.

Boe Carlson, Three Rivers Park District discussed reimbursements that have been used as a tool in the past, as a result of a lack of funding from the State. He feels this new proposal is very beneficial and flexible for agencies to decide how to use their funds.

John VonDeLinde, Anoka County Parks and Recreation asked two questions: 1. How do we split the pie (distribute funds amongst agencies); and 2. How are projects ranked and distributed? Regarding his first question, he likes the per capita idea. He feels it's simple and fair and recognizes where growth in the metropolitan area is. He does appreciate comments regarding visitation and feels this needs to be considered as well. Regarding his second question he likes the idea of allowing agencies to rank projects and feels this 'levels the playing field'. He feels this will help agencies to work together (even better than they do now) towards a larger appropriation from the State.

Rainville asked how many use Bunker Hills from outside of the County. VonDeLinde guessed 50-60%. Stefferud stated that our data on visitation is from 1998-1999 and is getting old, but he could bring it to this group.

Wicklund asked if we could see what the impacts of the formula would be that mixed population and visitation - possibly showing a couple of scenarios.

Marty Walsh, Carver County Parks stated that for his agency, reimbursements are not an option. He noted that regarding land acquisition funds – small parcels are very costly (in the millions of dollars). Walsh stated that regarding population – they will still be a small agency, even if we double their population. He noted that there needs to be a broader look at this from a systems perspective, as a whole, and look at a 20 year time span.

Skovholt discussed the amount that Carver County received in the CIP this year and the costs of land acquisition.

Request for Acquisition Opportunity Fund grant to acquire land at Lake Rebecca Park Reserve, Three Rivers Park District - Jan Youngquist, Sr. Planner -Parks

Youngquist gave a PowerPoint presentation discussing an acquisition opportunity grant request from Three Rivers Park District for reimbursement consideration for funding in a future CIP for the purchase of the Weinkauf parcel in Lake Rebecca Park Reserve.

Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District added that he is very excited about the acquisition of this property and noted that the true value lies in the protection of this natural resource along the Crow River.

Commissioner Wicklund motioned to recommend that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Authorize a grant of up to \$354,799 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Three Rivers Park District to partially fund the acquisition of the Weinkauf parcel in Lake Rebecca Park Reserve as shown on Attachments 2 and 3.
2. Allow up to \$532,199 of the acquisition costs of the Weinkauf parcel to be eligible for reimbursement consideration in a future regional parks CIP. However, the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that reimbursement will be granted, and expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

Commissioner Shlaferman seconded the motion.

Botzek asked about the appraisal and legal fees associated with the grant request and why do we bond for these dollars? Stefferud noted that past Commissions, Councils and the Legislature have talked about this and decided that they are ‘reasonable, bondable expenses’ because they must be done to acquire the land.

With no further discussion, **the motion carried.**

REPORTS

Chair: Skovholt pointed out an article: “Parks Acquisition Tops Agenda at 2007 State of the Region” that was included in the packet.

Commissioners: Lars Erdahl thanked Commissioners and noted that he will not be seeking re-appointment.

Staff: Beckman noted that the Council anticipates new appointments of Council Members by the end of March; therefore, re-appointments/appointments to this commission are not anticipated before April.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, March 6, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. at 390 N. Robert Street, St. Paul, MN in Room LLA.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Skovholt adjourned the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandi Dingle, Executive Secretary

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