

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

**MEETING OF**  
**METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION**  
**Meeting held at the Phalen Golf Course Clubhouse, Phalen Regional Park**  
**St. Paul, Minnesota**

**June 3, 2008**

**COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:** Barb Schmidt, Gary Botzek, Richard Jabs, Emily Barbeau, Robert Wicklund, Daniel Shlaferman, Bob Moeller, Jesse Reinhardt, Dan Wolter, Metropolitan Council Liaison to the Commission

**ABSENT:** Glen Skovholt, Chair

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Chair Jabs called the meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:02 p.m. on June 3, 2008.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES**

Commissioner Botzek motioned and Commissioner Moeller seconded to approve the June 3, 2008 Agenda.

Botzek asked about the discussion of a third option for item (2008-127) Proposed Park Acquisition Opportunity Grant rules to be effective from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009.

Sandi Dingle read a recommended amendment to the minutes from Glen Skovholt stated that the following language be added to option 2:

There was considerable support from Commission members and implementing agencies that acquisition costs above \$2,267,000 be eligible for 100% reimbursement.

Commissioner Schmidt motioned and Commissioner Wicklund seconded to approve the amended May 6, 2008 minutes, adding the language suggested above. **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.

**INFORMATION ITEM:**

**2008 Regional Parks System Visitor Study** – Information Specialist Group (IGS) Consulting, Jay Schafer and John Kari, Planning Analyst

John Kari introduced Jay Schafer from ISG Consulting who is a consultant the Council is working with for the development of our visitor study. Kari discussed the purpose of the survey to get baseline data for annual use estimates. He stated we are also looking to find out non-local visit data for the CIP as well as ethnic/racial background of park visitors. He noted that we will be looking at all park units.

Schafer stated that he is doing market research in the Twin Cities. He discussed the Parks and Trails Site-Intercept Survey Questionnaire and methodology in the development of the survey.

Kari discussed the test run done a week ago and noted it will be slightly modified based on that. He stated that the survey will begin this week and end by Labor Day.

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Barbeau asked if those questioned fill out the survey themselves. Schafer stated that he interviewer fills it out.

Schmidt asked if the Commission could see a copy of the questionnaire. Kari responded the staff will send it out when it is complete, as they are still 'tweaking' it.

Botzek asked about the level of detail of the questions. Schafer gave examples of demographic questions and stated that they would ask: what is the nearest intersection to your home, rather than specific addresses. Other questions include asking for their city and zip code.

Marty Walsh, Carver County Parks asked what compensations are being made if the survey is being done on a rainy day. Kari stated that they're working on more qualitative information.

Walsh questioned counts on sunny days. Kari stated that staff is more interested in characteristics of those using the parks. He noted that surveys will also be done more than once.

Walsh asked about vehicle counts and multiples. Youngquist explained that the number of surveys being done overall should give us a good perspective.

Greg Mack, Ramsey County Parks asked what age groups will be questioned. Schafer responded ages 12 and up.

## **BUSINESS:**

### **(2008-127) Proposed Park Acquisition Opportunity Grant rules to be effective from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009 - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks**

Stefferd continued the discussion from MPOSC's May 6 Meeting. He reviewed existing park acquisition opportunity grant rules.

Option 1: 40% grant with 60% CIP reimbursable match. An agency can request up to \$1 million and must apply this option for any additional grants

Option 2: 75% grant with 25% non-reimbursable match. An agency can request up to \$1 .7 million. As noted in the previous agenda item, 50% of the acquisition cost's funding gap would be eligible for CIP reimbursement consideration.

The Commission discussed recommendation to drop Option 1, starting on July 1 and use Option 2 rules.

Stefferd discussed memo dated May 29 that shows the amount of reimbursements the Metropolitan Council may consider funding in future regional parks capital improvement programs.

Stefferd discussed projected revenue and demand for acquisition opportunity grants for July 2008 to June 2009.

Stefferd discussed the benefits of Option 2 rules.

Schmidt asked about State Bonds and where they fit. Stefferud stated that they are used first.

Barbeau clarified that this new option 2 rule now only allows for 75% of acquisition costs to be eligible for reimbursement. Stefferud confirmed and stated that agencies are in favor of this as they get more money up front.

Wicklund questioned phase 1 and phase 2 grants used for cleanup of contaminated soils. Stefferud stated that there are other funds for clean up of the environment, for example, environmental protection funds, and that the Metropolitan Council park grants should be a last resort.

Wicklund clarified that 'clean up' would not be a part of acquisition costs. Stefferud confirmed that this is consistent with our past policy and stated that this has worked well in the past.

Moeller stated that he is concerned that this may work against some counties, for example, Carver, who has a smaller tax base. Stefferud discussed the local benefit equals the local contribution, for example, 25% of costs.

Schmidt commented that more expensive acquisitions result in higher costs to agencies. Beckman stated that we don't have a vehicle for large acquisition dollars. She agrees with the need to come up with a better one, stated the need to focus on this change and continue to work on other sources of revenues, for example, the Park Foundation currently being established. She noted that this is not perfect, but it is a short term compromise that is simpler for Council Members to understand.

Schmidt wanted to hear from implementing agencies.

Botzek asked about the Park Foundation and how it would work if a donor wanted to earmark dollars for a certain area. Beckman stated that this could be done.

Boe Carlson, Three River's Park District asked could a reimbursement be put into the CIP for 100% reimbursement, so agencies could choose to buy on their own, but then ask for 100% reimbursement in the CIP. Stefferud stated yes and gave an example of Dakota County's acquisition of the Wicker parcel for Spring Lake Park Reserve.

Steve Sullivan, Dakota County encouraged money other than local tax money that could be used for 25% match. He asked could the use of Met Council dollars be used to match state dollars. Stefferud described how other revenue streams are counted first and then 75% of funding gap is addressed by this program. Sullivan stated that he is unclear with the distinction of what funds can be used for the 25% match.

Sullivan suggested that environmental costs be included as grant eligible. He suggested that environmental assessment costs should be included, but not remediation costs.

Sullivan agreed with Schmidt that if acquisition costs exceed \$2.2 million, they're really not the same, that the percent of reimbursement is different.

Marty Walsh, Carver County stated they prefer Option 1, as Option 2 has a local property tax impact. He would like to find out more about the Park Foundation. He feels that Option 2 should be an interim policy. Stefferud stated that it would be – for one year.

Sullivan gave the Dakota County Board's view, that all grants are not treated the same. He stated that the Board is asking what the difference is between development grants vs. acquisition grants. He noted that the Met Council and the County Board have a common interest to complete the system.

John Elholm, Washington County stated that 100% acquisition cost above \$2,267,000, if funded by the park agency, should be eligible for reimbursement consideration in future Regional Parks CIPs under the Option 2 Rules.

Boe Carlson stated that he did not have a position.

Mike Kimble, Minneapolis Park and Recreation agreed with 100% reimbursable (as stated by Elholm).

Greg Mack, Ramsey County Parks, noted that this is an interim measure. He stated that if 75% becomes a movement for development and redevelopment then he is not in agreement.

Jody Martinez, St. Paul Park and Recreation stated that in the spirit of compromise she felt the options presented were a good choice.

Mark Themig, Scott County stated that he wants existing rules in place, but would like to know more about the Park Foundation and how they can help with acquisition costs.

Steffered asked if the Council kept both options, what would the rule be if the cost is above \$2.267 million. He noted that the Council did not like two sets of rules and wanted things 'simplified'. Botzek responded that he sees it as two options and not two sets of 'rules'. He feels that there are different situations continually and we need to allow for some flexibility.

Wicklund reminded the group that the rationale behind the 75/25 reimbursement was to reduce the 'pot' of projects eligible for reimbursement and have the agencies provide more of a match. He stated he feels the Council has made a concerted effort to have more money for acquisition and that is why it differs from development and redevelopment dollars. Wicklund also stated he felt we need more discussion of what can be used for matching dollars and what can not.

After further discussion, the Commission disagreed with the staff recommendation. Instead, Commissioner Schmidt motioned and it was seconded by Wicklund to recommend that both Option 1 and Option 2 Rules be continued for the period from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009. And, that 100% of acquisition costs above \$2,267,000 financed by a park agency should be eligible for CIP reimbursement consideration under the Option 2 Rules. **The motion carried.**

**(2008-74) Clarifying non-reimbursement local match requirement for Park Acquisition Opportunity Grants awarded to Dakota County for Empire Wetlands Regional Park - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks**  
Steffered reviewed the past request and award to Dakota County for Empire Wetlands Regional Park and the question of what portion should be eligible for reimbursement.

After discussion of the previous item and subsequent motion the Commission disagreed with the staff recommendation and instead Commissioner Schmidt motioned and it was seconded by Commissioner Shlaferman to recommend that 100% of acquisition costs above \$2,267,000 financed by a park agency should be eligible for CIP reimbursement consideration. In the Empire Wetlands' Regional Park case, the Commission recommended that \$2,873,334—not \$2,155,000 of funds provided by Dakota County should be eligible for CIP reimbursement consideration. **The motion carried.**

**(2008-140) Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund grant request to purchase land for Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park, Scott County - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks**  
Steffered discussed the request for the park acquisition opportunity fund grant to purchase land for Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park under option 2.

Mark Themig, Scott County stated that they hoped to finance the difference with Greenway grant money. Stefferud stated that he would need to check on whether Greenway grant money, which is Environmental Trust Fund money, can be matched with other Environmental Trust Fund money in the Council's grant.

Commissioner Botzek motioned and it was seconded by Commissioner Moeller that the Metropolitan Council authorize a grant from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Scott County of \$848,369 comprised of \$170,744 of Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund revenue and \$113,162 of Metropolitan Council bonds in the State Acquisition Account, plus \$564,463 from the Land Acquisition Opportunity Account. The grant will partially finance the acquisition of 47.08 acres of the Adelman parcel for Doyle-Kennefick Regional Park.

**(2008-143) Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund grant request to purchase land for Baker Park Reserve, Three Rivers Park District - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks**  
Stefferud discussed the request for the park acquisition opportunity fund grant to purchase land for Baker Park Reserve.

Barbeau asked for clarification between abatement and assessment costs. Stefferud verified that this is a clean up and is grant eligible.

Botzek clarified that this is a residence. Stefferud confirmed that it was.

Commissioner Wicklund motioned and it was seconded by Shlaferman that the Metropolitan Council authorize a grant of \$352,050 from the Land Acquisition Opportunity Account in the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Three Rivers Park District. The grant will partially finance the acquisition of the 6.46 acre Laidlaw parcel for Baker Park Reserve.

## **REPORTS**

Staff: None.

Chair: None.

Commissioners: None.

## **NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday, July 8, 2008. Watch future Agenda for off-site meeting place, time, directions, and details.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Chair Jabs adjourned the meeting at 5:47 p.m. A tour of Phalen and Keller Regional Parks followed the business meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle, Executive Secretary

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