

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

MEETING OF
METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

July 7, 2009

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Chuck Haas, Chair, Billy Dinkel, Barb Schmidt, Daniel Shlaferman, Bob Moeller, Robert Wicklund

ABSENT: Mark Peterson, Richard Jabs, Dan Wolter, Metropolitan Council Liaison to the Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Haas called the meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:04p.m. on June 2, 2009.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

Commissioner Schmidt motioned and Commissioner Moeller seconded to approve the July 7, 2009 Agenda and the June 2, 2009 MPOSC Minutes, with one small correction. Schmidt noted that she was not in attendance at the June 2, 2009 meeting, as the minutes indicate. **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:

Reimbursement Authorization for Ramsey County Regional Park Projects Financed with FY 2011 Parks and Trails Fund Appropriation – Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferdud gave some background stating that Ramsey County has three projects that will be financed from its share of the State Fiscal Year 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation. The County would like to begin work on those projects prior to July 1, 2010 –which is the start date of State Fiscal Year 2011. The premise for the earlier start date is to align the work on these projects with the County’s calendar fiscal year and to insure that the work would be completed by June 30, 2012—the end date for work financed with the State Fiscal Year 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation. Stefferud also noted that these projects are weather dependent, so they’d like to begin this fall.

Schmidt asked if the grant agreement would be similar to what we use for capital bonding projects. Stefferud stated that it would.

Wicklund noted that this is a stronger level of reimbursement.

Wicklund motioned and Shlaferman seconded to recommend that the Metropolitan Council authorize Ramsey County to expend funds on the following State Fiscal Year 2011 Parks and Trails Fund projects under the stipulation that the County will not be reimbursed for its expenses from the FY 2011 Parks and Trails Fund appropriation until the appropriation is available and after execution of grant amendments or grant agreements for these projects:

1. \$141,000 to complete the Nature Play Area and Children’s Garden at Bald Eagle Otter Lakes Regional Park’s Nature Center.
2. \$130,000 for Tamarack Nature Center Volunteer Corps.

3. \$343,000 for Battle Creek Regional Park restoration of a 200 acre prairie and oak savannah.

Information Item: Annual Use Estimate of the Metropolitan Regional Park System for 2008 – Jan Youngquist, Senior Planner-Parks

Youngquist gave an overview of the 2008 Use Estimates Report. She stated that the estimated annual visits have increased 20% since 2004. The five most visited regional parks, trails, and special recreation features in 2008 were:

1. Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park
2. Como Regional Park, Zoo and Conservatory Special Recreation Feature
3. Mississippi Gorge Regional Park (Minneapolis and St. Paul)
4. Nokomis-Hiawatha Regional Park
5. Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park

Youngquist stated that 55% were local visits and 45% were non-local. This shows us that this truly is a 'regional' park system.

Youngquist discussed how the annual use estimate is calculated. She stated that these numbers are used in the funding formula for operations and maintenance.

Dinkel asked if there would be any reason to inflate these numbers. Youngquist stated that in the official context, the numbers do help in calculating the operations and maintenance funding allocation.

Sullivan commented that this report has been a valuable tool over the years.

Shlaferman asked about the calculation of special event traffic. Youngquist discussed the increased number at Como and noted that as agencies have more events, i.e., marathons, etc., we will see these numbers increasing.

Dinkel asked if there is a correlation between the recession and increased park usage. Youngquist stated that this is an interesting question and one that staff could look into further.

Shlaferman asked if the age of park users is known. Youngquist stated that she did not have that information with her but could bring to a future meeting.

REPORTS

Chair: Haas discussed a study being done by the Department of Revenue on equestrian use and the possibility of boarding facilities being taxed as a business and not agriculture.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: Embrace Open Space is doing a study on the value of land near parks and reported to the Land Use Advisory Committee on May 28, 2009.

NEXT MEETING

August 4, 2009 - Business meeting, followed by a tour at the Silverwood Special Recreation Feature. Staff also suggested moving the September 1, 2009 meeting to either 9/3 or 9/10.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Haas adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

TOUR

Boe Carlson welcomed the Commission, made introductions and led the group on a bus tour of Lake Rebecca Park Reserve.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle, Executive Secretary

Q:\parks\2009\08042009\7-7-2009 MPOSC minutes.docm