

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

MEETING OF
METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

March 2, 2010

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Chuck Haas, Barb Schmidt, Billy Dinkel, Tom Gamec, Jeff Lee, Doug Baines, Wendy Wulff, Metropolitan Council Liaison to the Commission

ABSENT: Richard Jabs, Bob Moeller, Daniel Shlaferman

SWEARING IN: Chair Haas swore in two new members, Jeff Lee and Doug Baines.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Haas called the meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 3:04 p.m. on March 2, 2010.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

Commissioner Schmidt motioned and Commissioner Gamec seconded to approve the March 2, 2010 Agenda and the February 2, 2010 Minutes. **The motion carried.**

PUBLIC INVITATION: Invitation to interested persons to address the Commission on matters not on the agenda (each speaker is limited to five-minute presentation). None.

BUSINESS

Update to 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan Proposed System Plan Changes - Jan Youngquist, Senior Planner-Parks

Youngquist led the group on a discussion of proposed system changes. Today's discussion looked specifically at requests from Ramsey County, Dakota County and Scott County. She noted that these will not be acted upon today but are information items only. Staff will propose recommendations at a future meeting.

Ramsey County

Youngquist asked Ken Wehrle, Director of Planning and Development from Ramsey County, to join her and assist in answering any questions from the Commission. She then described the proposed changes for Ramsey County.

Youngquist began with the Vadnais Snail Lakes Regional Park proposed regional park boundary adjustment.

Haas asked for clarification on the definition of a regional park. Youngquist noted that areas connected with a regional trail can be combined to equal one regional park.

Wulff asked what the acreage of the golf course was. Wehrle stated that it is 60 acres.

Schmidt asked if the golf course would be used for cross-country skiing in the winter. Wehrle stated that at this time it is not.

Gamec pointed out similar situations where golf courses are included in the regional park. Youngquist clarified that at our last meeting there was discussion of including Highland Park Golf Course as it is being used in the winter for cross-country skiing. She also noted that when use estimates are done, the number of golfers are not counted. Youngquist specified that the acres are included for operations and maintenance calculations because of the winter activities.

Baines asked if there is a concentrated effort to increase the number of golf courses in the regional park system. Youngquist stated there is not and that those added were already in existence.

Youngquist discussed the criteria for regional parks. She noted that this presentation is for informational purposes as well as to generate discussion and that a recommendation would be acted on at a future meeting.

Next Youngquist discussed a request from Ramsey County regarding the Rice Creek South Regional Trail proposed Regional Trail search corridor that would run through the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP).

Dinkel asked about acquisition costs and cleanup. Wehrle stated that this area is free of 'hot spots' so no clean up would be necessary and also stated that they are trying to get the corridor designated as park property at no cost.

Schmidt asked about development of two remaining parcels of TCAAP property. Youngquist stated that they will be up for auction. There was a development plan, but the developer pulled out. She noted that the army is not willing to do the clean up, so anyone willing to purchase the property must keep that cost in mind.

Youngquist discussed the criteria for Regional Trails.

Wulff asked about the two trails discussed shown on the map that are only 1.5 miles apart and stated having the trail go through the natural area makes more sense than having it along Lexington Avenue. Beckman stated that this is a valuable point and requested that staff will follow up with Ramsey County and get back to the Commission.

Next Youngquist discussed Trout Brook Regional Trail – proposed Regional Trail search corridor.

Again, Youngquist reviewed the criteria for Regional Trails.

Dinkel asked about changes to the Regional Parks Policy Plan after it is passed, such as a change in a trail alignment. Beckman stated that we do keep an eye on this and noted that these are 'search corridors' and therefore not set in stone.

Baines asked about the liability with the TCAAP property. Beckman noted that the EPA is ultimately responsible. Haas stated that Baines brings up a good point and asked if it is the Metropolitan Council's position that we do not want to fund clean up. Wulff noted that this will be discussed later on the agenda under the review of policies and strategies.

Dakota County

Youngquist asked Steve Sullivan, Director of Parks from Dakota County, to join her and assist in answering any questions from the Commission. She then described the proposed changes for Dakota County.

Youngquist began with the Thompson-Kaposia-Kaposia Landing (formerly Port Crosby) proposed Regional Park study area. She noted that this is different than a 'search area' and does not guarantee that a park will become part of the Regional Park system. The study would be conducted to determine whether the facility warrants regional status.

Haas asked if disc golf is viewed differently than regular golf. Youngquist stated that regular golf is considered an enterprise activity with green fees, etc. whereas disc golf is not.

Youngquist discussed criteria for Regional Parks. She pointed out the existing hockey rinks, tennis courts, and ball fields that are not typical of a 'regional park' but more of a 'local park'. This will be something that the Commission and the Council will need to consider.

Sullivan noted that he is appreciative for the opportunity to explore the area to determine if it should be considered for inclusion in the Regional Park system.

Wulff asked about Ritter Farm in Lakeville and why that hasn't been proposed for Regional Park status. Sullivan stated that while the nature of use and acreage would fit the criteria, there is no interest by Lakeville to do this.

Haas asked about local municipal parks and clarification of ownership or who runs. Youngquist explained that the implementing agency would be in charge if it were included in the Regional Park system. Haas asked if this is a new concept. Youngquist stated that this is new territory and a good reason why this needs to be a 'study area'.

Lee asked if there are implementing agencies that manage trails or parks that are owned by another entity. Youngquist stated there is and gave the example of Regional Trails, where the land is leased from the Regional Rail Authority.

Next Youngquist discussed the Southwest Dakota County Regional Park search area – proposed deletion from the Regional Park system.

Next Youngquist discussed the Rosemount River Access Greenway Trail – proposed Regional Trail search corridor and North Creek Greenway Trails – proposed Regional Trail search corridors.

Youngquist showed a video that is out on YouTube showing Dakota County Greenway Corridors that was developed to help City Councils and the public understand and 'buy in' to the need for development of the greenway. Youngquist stated that she will e-mail a link to this presentation to the Commission.

Scott County

Youngquist asked Mark Themig, from Scott County, to join her and assist in answering any questions from the Commission. She then described the proposed changes for Scott County.

Youngquist began with the Big Rivers proposed Regional Trail extension.

Themig discussed a federal highway fund grant proposed as well as a land owner (with 600 acres) that would like to see a trail corridor through his land as a legacy. Themig pointed out that this would move the proposed trail away from industry and provide a much more ideal opportunity to run the trail through areas rich in natural resources.

Next Youngquist discussed the Prior Lake Outlet proposed Regional Trail search corridor as well as the Louisville proposed Regional Trail search corridor.

Themig discussed his disappointment in trying to negotiate with the railroad to acquire land for this trail. He noted that they are asking much more than the appraised value of the land.

Wulff asked about this trail and its closeness to one noted “to complete the system” shown in purple on the map. Themig stated that they are looking at combining these where possible. Youngquist reiterated that these are ‘search areas’ and not necessarily where the trail will be located.

Next Youngquist discussed both the Elko New Market-Blakeley-Doyle Kennefick Connection proposed Regional Trail search corridor and the Elko New Market-Blakely proposed Regional Trail search corridor.

Youngquist reviewed the criteria for Regional Trails.

Lastly, Youngquist discussed the Blakeley Bluff’s proposed Regional Trail extension and again reviewed criteria for Regional Trails.

Review of Policy Revisions – Ann Beckman

Beckman walked through the strategies where Commissioners has questions at our last meeting.

Strategy 7: Beckman stated that the transportation staff was consulted and they recommend that this existing policy should not be changed.

Strategy 8: Beckman stated that the question was raised whether the Regional Parks Foundation should be open to raising funds for developing park lands and facilities. Beckman stated that Jane Johnson (present at the meeting) and Peter Bell both feel this is a good idea.

Beckman discussed the differences between linking tails and destination trails or greenways and reviewed clarifying language for each.

Strategy 2: Beckman discussed the release of restrictive covenants and noted that this is not a land exchange. She discussed added language put in for clarification and noted that before releasing a restrictive covenant, the Metropolitan Council will make ‘findings’ with respect to the existing park system unit which consider several factors, which were listed in the strategy.

Strategy 3: Beckman discussed issues with brownfields and noted that this is a long term issue that requires study. She noted that the Council will pay for contamination cleanup only when there is no real

alternative for the park or trail function and/or funding. She also reviewed conditions where the Council may consider funding soil contamination cleanup or capping abandoned well that have contaminated their ground water aquifer on regional park land.

Lee asked about Phase 1 environmental site assessments. Beckman noted that the point is to 'know before you buy' and stated this is why this needs to be done prior to acquisition. She stated that the cost of the Phase 1 environmental site assessments is eligible for reimbursement as an acquisition cost.

Beckman summarized that at the April 6th meeting staff hopes to bring recommendations back to the Commission for review and if possible those recommendations could be acted upon in May and moved on to the Community Development Committee and then the full Council.

REPORTS

Chair: None.

Commissioners: None.

Staff: None

NEXT MEETING

April 6, 2010, beginning at 4pm in Room LLA.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle, Executive Secretary

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