

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

MEETING OF
METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

June 7, 2011

TOUR: Commission members present enjoyed a tour of Spring Lake Park Reserve in Dakota County prior to its business meeting.

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Barb Schmidt, Jeff Lee, Daniel Shlaferman, Richard Jabs, Doug Baines, Bob Moeller, Wendy Wulff, Metropolitan Council Liaison to the Commission

ABSENT: Chuck Haas, Tom Gamec

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Jabs called the meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:25p.m. Tuesday, June 7, 2011.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

Commissioner Baines motioned and Commissioner Shlaferman seconded to approve the June 7, 2011 Agenda and the May 3, 2011 Minutes. Vice Chair Jabs called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

PUBLIC INVITATION:

None.

BUSINESS

Twin Lakes Regional Trail Master Plan, Three Rivers Park District – Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferd gave a PowerPoint presentation and discussed the Master Plan submitted by Three Rivers Park District for Twin Lakes Regional Trail. He discussed boundaries and acquisition costs, the stewardship plan, development and cost estimates.

Schmidt asked for examples of natural resource features. It was noted that the Twin Lakes and adjacent parkland have the ability to hook up to the Mississippi River corridor, which includes many natural resources.

Baines asked if it is linked to the North Mississippi Regional Park Trail. Stefferud responded that it is.

Schmidt asked about trail widths. It was noted that the plan is to have 10 foot wide trails and to upgrade existing trails as able.

Commissioner Baines made a motion to recommend, and it was seconded by Commissioner Lee that the Metropolitan Council:

1. Approve the Twin Lakes Regional Trail Master Plan (Referral No. 50008-1).
2. Encourage Three Rivers Park District to collaborate with others in multi-jurisdictional funding of the East Segment since more expensive trail design options provide benefits beyond trail users.

With no further discussion, Vice Chair Jabs called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

Policy Paper on Enterprise Fund Facility Visitation and Application to Disbursing State Appropriations for Operations and Maintenance - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferud provided background on Enterprise Fund Facilities and gave language from the 2030 Regional parks Policy Plan regarding “Enterprise Activities”.

Stefferud discussed the exclusion of visits of enterprise fund facilities and costs of their operations and maintenance that should not be supported in part with state appropriations.

The Commission then heard comments from the following park agencies on the proposal to not count the visits and associated operations and maintenance costs of the following facilities because they were managed to be self-financing with user fees paying most if not all their operations and maintenance costs and even capital improvement costs:

- Bunker Beach, Bunker Hills RP, Anoka County
- Battle Creek Family Aquatic Center, Battle Creek RP, Ramsey County
- Snowtubing and downhill ski area at Elm Creek PR, Three Rivers Park District
- Snowtubing and snowboard area at Wirth RP, Mpls. Park Board
- Downhill ski area at Como RP, St. Paul
- Hyland Ski and Snowboard Area, Three Rivers Park District

John Vondelinde, Anoka County Parks
Boe Carlson, Three Rivers Park District
Greg Mack, Ramsey County Parks
Mike Kimble, City of St. Paul

To summarize, the park agencies stated:

1. General fund revenues, in addition to user fees, helped finance the operations and maintenance costs of these enterprise fund facilities.
2. It would be very difficult to separate out the snowmaking and grooming costs for the downhill ski and snow tubing areas at Elm Creek and Wirth parks. The downhill ski area at Como Park was now fully funded from the city’s general fund as user fees had not been sufficient to cover those costs.
3. Park agencies were generating fees from users to partially recover the cost of providing facilities/programs for a particular activity. (Cost recovery). This practice should be encouraged since it helps reduce the amount of general fund subsidy financed with local property taxes and State appropriations required to provide that facility/activity.
4. They opposed excluding the operations and maintenance costs and visits to these enterprise fund facilities as part of the disbursement of State appropriations for operations and maintenance.
5. All four agencies recommended additional discussion on this topic with Metro Council staff and presentation of the outcome to the MPOSC at their July 5 meeting.

Baines stated that there has been discussion in the past if free enterprise should be subsidized and noted that the trouble is the ‘pie’ is only so big.

Wulff sees this as trying to be fair and gave the example of Hastings, Eagan, etc. when their water parks lose money; the city/taxpayers foot the bill. She is okay with offering these uses in regional parks but noted that water parks are not typically a regional park function.

Jabs felt there should be more discussion and stated that it bothers him that these enterprise funds are not making money.

Beckman stated that staff will revisit this issue and have broader discussions and noted that it would be reasonable to table this item.

Shlaferman commented that none of us could have envisioned these activities 50 years ago just as we have no idea of what activities will be proposed for future parks.

Lee stated that looking at cost recovery models would be helpful when looking at master plans to help the Commission be more informed in decision making.

Wulff felt the discussion of cost recovery is very important for the agencies but felt it is more important for the Commission to discuss what regional park usage is eligible for reimbursement. She noted that we need to treat each other equally.

Beckman discussed guiding principles that would be helpful.

Commissioner Baines motioned to table the item and have staff bring it back to the Commission at the July meeting. Commissioner Lee seconded the motion and suggested involving the agencies.

The motion carried.

Steffered noted that calculation of the formula and disbursement of State funds must occur by August 1 as required by State law.

Park Acquisition Opportunity Grant for 4 parcels for Mississippi River Regional Trail, Dakota County - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Steffered gave a presentation regarding the request from Dakota County for a Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant to help finance the acquisition and related costs of four parcels needed for right of way for the Mississippi River Regional Trail. The grant request is \$56,044.

Commissioner Schmidt made a motion to recommend, and it was seconded by Commissioner Baines that the Metropolitan Council authorize a grant of \$56,044 from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Acquisition Account in the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Dakota County to partially finance the acquisition of four parcels as described in Attachment 1 for the Mississippi River Regional Trail. The grant should be financed with:

- \$33,626 from the 2009 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund appropriation
- \$22,418 from Metropolitan Council bonds

With no further discussion, Vice Chair Jabs called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

Change in scope of Eastman Nature Center development grant SG-2010-102 to maximize use of grant proceeds, Three Rivers Park District - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Steffered gave a presentation outlining the request from Three Rivers Park District. Based on construction bids for the renovation and expansion of Eastman Nature Center in Elm Creek Park Reserve, there is a balance in this \$3.6 million grant of \$1,080,000. The Park District proposes changing the scope of the grant to finance additional projects.

Commissioner Baines made a motion to recommend, and it was seconded by Commissioner Lee that the Metropolitan Council authorize an amendment to grant SG-2010-102 which changes the scope of the grant by allowing \$1,080,000 of the grant to be used as follows:

\$630,000 for renovating the maintenance shop at Crow Hassan Park Reserve
\$275,000 to construct additional trails in the western half of Carver Park Reserve
\$150,000 to plan and design renovation of Medicine Lake Regional Trail
\$25,000 to establish a potable water supply system for campground activities at Baker Park Reserve.

With no further discussion, Vice Chair Jabs called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

REPORTS

- **Chair** – None.
- **Commissioners** – Lee reported that he was at a MPRB meeting where they conveyed their appreciation with the Metropolitan Council's cooperation and planning efforts in and around Lake of the Isles.
- **Staff** – Youngquist announced that the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan won an Award of Merit for Visual Design of the updated 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan from the Minnesota Association of Government Communicators.

Wulff stated that the interviews have been conducted for the open seats on the Commission and appointments should be made soon.

NEXT MEETING

July 19, 2011 beginning at 3:00pm at Gale Woods Farm Special Recreation Feature – meeting at the education building. A tour will follow the business meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle
Executive Assistant
Community Development