

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

SPECIAL MEETING OF
METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

August 21, 2012

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Tony Yarusso, Bob Moeller, Carrie Wasley, Seyon Nyanwleh, Daniel Shlaferman, Jeff Lee, Emily Johnson Piper, Wendy Wulff, Metropolitan Council Liaison to the Commission

ABSENT: Barb Schmidt

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Wasley called the Special Meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:02 p.m. Tuesday, August 21, 2012.

BUSINESS

Presentation and Discussion: Thrive MSP 2040 and the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission - Wendy Wulff, Metropolitan Council Member District 16

- *Thrive Overview*
- *Let's Talk:*

Goal: Engage and provide input, particularly on topics relating to metropolitan parks & open spaces and natural resources, to Thrive MSP 2040, the long-range plan that creates the vision for the seven-county metro region. This is the first opportunity for input in an ongoing process.

Key discussion questions:

- What does our region need to thrive? What kind of region do we want for our children? For our children's children?
- What decisions can we make today that will set us on a path toward achieving that vision?

More specifically:

- What do you see as the issues and challenges facing the region over the next 30 years and how should the Metropolitan Council address these challenges through Thrive MSP 2040?
- What policies in the previous regional plans should we keep or adjust? What policies should we discontinue? What policies would you add to Thrive MSP 2040?
- What criteria should the Council use in resolving tensions between regional goals and policies?

What advice do you have as the Council moves ahead on developing Thrive MSP 2040?

Wulff gave a presentation regarding Thrive MSP 2040. She noted all advisory committees of the Council are being given a presentation and the Council is soliciting their feedback, as well as from other venues.

Wulff gave a brief background and history of the Metropolitan Council and also discussed the Mission of the Council.

Wulff continued and stated that Thrive MSP 2040 is to be a comprehensive development guide. It will update the 2030 Regional Policy Development Framework to provide policy direction of the next round of the Council's systems and policy plans, including the next Regional Parks Policy Plan.

Wulff discussed the Vision and opportunities for collaboration and asked "what does our region need to thrive?" and again solicited feedback from this group.

Wasley asked for comments from the audience first.

Jenna Fletcher, Trust for Public Land (TPL) discussed the demographic changes in the region and stated that they think it's time to think about balance with where parks are going in alliance with population growth. She discussed access and public transit. She asked the Council to think about balance for the future and also possibly about more special recreation features.

Wasley commented that in working with the Hmong community she was told that they didn't realize these facilities are public. She felt more signage is needed in multiple languages.

Piper discussed promoting different types of offerings.

Yarusso discussed coordinating future park developments with transit development and encourage more public access to our parks. Wulff mentioned a map being developed that outlines public transit to parks.

Moeller discussed expanding transit rather than building more parks.

Yingling Fan, Humphrey Institute discussed research that she has done in Minneapolis regarding minority and low income usage of parks. She stated there is a significant gap between Caucasian and minority populations using our parks. She also found lower usage among single parents. She felt some of their findings could be utilized in planning for the regional park system as well. She asked that as we look forward, what strategies are we going to use to increase usage among minorities and low income population groups to increase social equity within the region.

Wulff asked if those surveyed were asked why there were not using parks. Fan noted that they did but found no common indicator. Wulff asked if, once the report was published, it could be shared. Fun responded that yes, it will be available online.

Mike Kimble, St. Paul Parks shared comments received and passed out a summary.

Wasley asked about the old Wilder property and if it is being considered for a regional park. She was told it was not large enough. She asked if the Council will be looking at size limitations. Wulff stated this is something that would be discussed at the parks policy plan level.

Fletcher noted that TPL is facilitating acquisition in partnership with the City of St. Paul for this property.

Yarusso stated that he felt that it may fall under the scope of special recreation feature.

Wulff discussed other factors that determine regional status, such as the percentage of visits that come from outside the jurisdiction.

Nyanwleh suggested redirecting our funds into existing parks instead of using it for additional acquisition.

Piper agreed with the need to invest in existing parks but also sees a need to acquire future lands for parks. She noted that our parks are accessible and it is important in attracting people and businesses.

Nyanwleh also discussed the importance of safety in our parks.

Wulff asked staff to discuss where the funding comes from. Stefferud explained the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and that 10% of that money is earmarked for land acquisition. He noted that much of that includes acquisitions of inholdings within existing parks. The remaining 90% is distributed amongst agencies for capital improvements and programming. He also explained that state bond appropriations with Metropolitan Council match is another revenue stream. Therefore, most of the money is being used for the existing system. He noted that they have been looking at diversity in population usage over the past 20 years as well as trends, i.e., dog parks.

Youngquist noted that a key part of the regional park system is protection of natural resources. It's not just about recreation but about preservation of natural resources. This was a key theme in the current framework.

Moeller stated he feels comfortable with the current acquisition of land. He noted that he feels we need to increase the investment in awareness and public transit access. He suggested free transit days as a marketing tool.

Steffered noted that a forum has been formed to look at these issues (Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee). They will look at access, transit, marketing, etc.

Moeller felt that in regards to awareness, it is effective to give folks a bus ride, field day, etc. to see, first hand, what is available. He felt this could be financed with regional dollars.

Wasley suggested that we take our parks for granted and asked how we compare to other regions. Stefferud stated that we compare well. He discussed legacy dollars that can be used for programming and also for accessibility.

Wulff reminded the committee that the Legacy money is a very significant new source of funding that was not there when the previous framework was developed.

Nyanwleh discussed one of the goals of Thrive MSP 2040:

- Create a regional vision that benefits everyone: residents, business owners, local officials, community leaders.

He asked if using 10% for acquisition is a law that could be revisited. He asked Youngquist what we do with preserved land. Youngquist responded that in a park reserve, 80% of the land is preserved in a high quality natural state and 20% is used for recreation.

Piper spoke to the point about accessibility and gave the example of North Mississippi Regional Park that is across Hwy 94 from a residential neighborhood and therefore access is an issue.

Lee stated that there has been a lot of money put into acquisition and a lot in development. He feels we need more money to protect the natural resources.

Wulff suggested some of that could come under habitat protection and additional legacy funding could be utilized as well. She reminded the group that this discussion is about long term visioning and not budget oriented.

Wasley stated that she feels it is important to know what's been done in the past in order to plan for the future.

Moeller discussed invasive species and stated that it's a big deal and asked what we are doing from a long range standpoint to solicit long range solutions. Wasley noted that some of the conservation districts do have staff that focus on these issues.

Tim Sevcik, Anoka County noted that natural resource protection always seems to be the first to go when there are budget cuts. He noted that matching funds is their biggest challenge. He felt there is a need to address long term strategies to preservation of natural resources.

Shlaferman discussed the changes in demographics in the metro area. He would look for more tranquil uses of parks. He discussed some of the amenities that draw people to the parks and suggested a regional director or coordinator to draw more users into our parks may be beneficial.

Yarusso asked about walk-in or backpack-in campsites. Also usage that involves 'leave no trace' that could be considered in park reserves. He also discussed trails not yet developed. Corridors have to be developed – more than just identified. He would like to see expansion of trails and more linking of trails.

Wulff asked about big goals like Calhoun.

Piper stated that development of the upper river front should be a goal.

Yarusso discussed outside of funding, coordination of efforts between organizations should be stressed and gave the example of the TCAAP property.

Wasley noted that there will be opportunities for further comments and the next meeting.

Moeller discussed linking trails and noted that there is an economic benefit and gave the example of the trail system in southern Minnesota (Root River Trail) that links several small towns that enjoy heavy tourism. He suggested the need to partner with people who can help make it happen.

Engen discussed Thrive MSP 2040 website (www.thrivemsp.org) where comments are being accepted or suggested emailing the Council at thriveMSP@metc.state.mn.us.

Another comment was made requesting more active uses in our urban parks that would draw young people in along Central Corridor.

Youngquist encouraged everyone, as residents of the region, to give feedback in other areas as well.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle
Principal Administrative Specialist
Community Development