

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

MEETING OF
METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

June 5, 2007

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Glen Skovholt, Barb Schmidt, Richard Jabs, Gary Botzek, Emily Barbeau, Daniel Shlaferman, Robert Wicklund

ABSENT: Lars Erdahl, Michael Rainville, Natalie Steffen, Metropolitan Council Liaison to the Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Skovholt called the meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:00 p.m. on June 5, 2007.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Wicklund motioned to approve the June 5, 2007 agenda and both the May 1 and May 8, 2007 minutes. Commissioner Shlaferman seconded the motion. **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:

Request for Reimbursement Consideration of Dakota County Share of Funding for Lebanon Hills Regional Park Surface Water Management Capital Costs - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferud discussed the background: A storm water management plan to eliminate flooding in Lebanon Hills Regional Park and in surrounding areas has been prepared by Dakota County in cooperation with affected watershed districts (2) plus the affected cities of Eagan, Rosemount and Apple Valley and the MN Dept. of Natural Resources. The total cost of capital projects to implement the plan is \$3,615,480 and agreement between the parties has been reached on each agency's share of this cost. Grants totaling \$677,450 from the DNR and the Metro Council were awarded in the past to partially finance the County's share of this project. An additional \$906,325 will have to be financed by Dakota County. The County is requesting reimbursement consideration of up to \$906,325 in future regional parks CIPs for this project. It is consistent with reimbursement policy criteria.

Skovholt asked if this issue has plagued the agency for some time. Schmidt responded that it has. She noted that it was an issue back when she was the director. Steve Sullivan, Dakota County Parks stated that it has gotten worse over time and it can, and has, affected visitation in the past.

It was motioned by Commissioner Schmidt and seconded by Commissioner Wicklund to recommend that the Metropolitan Council approve the request to consider reimbursing Dakota County up to \$906,325 for storm water management capital costs of project 905R at Lebanon Hills Regional Park in a future regional parks capital improvement program. This approval is contingent on successful execution and implementation of a joint powers agreement between Dakota County and the cities of Apple Valley, Eagan and Rosemount for project 905R as described in Attachment F. However, the Council does not under any circumstances represent or guarantee that reimbursement will be granted, and expenditure of local funds never entitles a park agency to reimbursement.

With no further discussion, **the motion carried.**

Distributing State Fiscal Year 2008 Appropriations for Metropolitan Regional Parks System Operations and Maintenance - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferd discussed the background: The Governor signed into law the omnibus FY 2008-2009 environment budget bill on May 3. It includes an appropriation of \$4,050,000 per year from the General Fund and \$4,570,000 of Lottery in Lieu of Sales Tax Revenue per year for Metro Regional Parks operations and maintenance grants. The appropriation is distributed under a formula in MS 473.351. Data needed for that formula—specifically actual documented operations and maintenance expenditures of park agencies in 2006, plus updated acreage data for each agency's portion of the park system and the 2006 visit estimates for each park agency was used.

Stefferd noted that this is an information item because no policy recommendation is required by the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and no policy action is needed by the Metropolitan Council.

Skovholt asked if appropriations have trended downward. Stefferud acknowledged that they have in relation to the yearly increases in costs and referred to the table in the handout that shows this.

Skovholt asked if legislators feel that too much is being spent on maintenance. Stefferud stated he didn't think they felt too much was being spent but that their appropriations boil down to how much they can afford within the constraints of their budget.

Wicklund stated that he hears the formula needs to be reviewed and that we don't want legislators to look at this as it could come back worse. Stefferud stated that even if you could get all ten agencies to agree to look at the law, one or more may not get favorable results. He noted that there has not been an attempt to 'open up the law' since it was enacted in 1985,

2006 Annual Visit Estimate for Metropolitan Regional Park System - Jan Youngquist, Senior Planner-Parks

Stefferd thanked Jan Youngquist (who was unable to attend today's meeting) for her extensive work in preparing this report. He noted that this is an information item since there is no basis for the MPOSC and Council to change the estimate. He noted that the decline from 2005 could be due to global warming and decline in skiers and snowmobiles. He also noted the decline in visits to Minneapolis/St. Paul parks (relative to the whole system's visits) could be due to the growth/development of more rural parks.

Botzek asked if Senator Pogemiller used these numbers in his discussions. Stefferud stated that he definitely did during the Operation and Maintenance discussions. He noted that comparing these numbers to the State Park visitation is not fair since State Parks visits do not include state trail visits.

Skovholt asked the implementing agencies (IA's) how these numbers help them.

Steve Sullivan, Dakota County stated that they help them to measure their success.

Greg Mack, Ramsey County agreed with Sullivan and also thanked Jan Youngquist for her hard work on this report. He stated that they use the numbers at the County Board level as a qualitative measure. He noted that although the trend showed declining visits from last year, he looks at overall trends long term and doesn't isolate numbers from year to year. He stated that over time there is increased growth/visits.

Boe Carlson, Three Rivers Park District pointed out that these numbers may not be exactly accurate, for example the number of people per vehicle used to calculate visits may not be accurate (multipliers being used are based on 1998-1999 data from the 1998-1999 Park Visitor Study).

Mike Kimble, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board agreed and added that they are seeing huge usage in their parks. He also stated that they use the numbers to help justify matching grants.

Evaluating Land Acquisition Opportunity Fund Distribution Rules - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferud discussed the background: Projected acquisition costs and the timing of expenditures to cover those costs needs to be collected from park agencies in order to propose options for spending the Acquisition Opportunity Fund and to determine what amount of Council bonds can be issued for the Fund. That data will be collected in the last half of June. The data will be analyzed in consultation with Fiscal Services staff to determine what amount of Council bonds can be issued for the Fund within fiscal policies and actions of the Metropolitan Council regarding bond debt costs, associated property tax limits and the 2008-09 Parks CIP. Options on rules for spending the Acquisition Opportunity Fund which include, but are not limited to the following issues need to be addressed:

- 1) The percent of an acquisition cost a grant could finance
- 2) The maximum amount an agency could receive from the Fund
- 3) The time line these rules should be in effect.

Since the existing rules on distributing grants from the Fund expire on June 30, the MPOSC should recommend continuation of the existing rules beyond June 30.

Schmidt asked when we would begin the process. Stefferud stated presumably at the July meeting or it would be on the August agenda.

Skovholt asked if any agency is close to the \$1 million limit. Stefferud stated that Scott County is, but noted that the 'clock' would start new on July 1.

Wicklund asked if unused money could carry over. Stefferud stated it would.

Mark Themig, Scott County clarified if projections should be made based on current rules in place. Stefferud discussed what requests entail and noted that agencies should submit all projected costs. No presumptions should be made by the agencies on the rules for distributing the grants.

Sullivan discussed the fundamental principals that would drive the formula. Skovholt stated that he would like to revisit '60% reimbursement' rule.

Schmidt stated that the real issue is buying what you 'need' vs. what you would like.

Botzek asked if the program began in 2001. Stefferud stated it did and that the Park Commission developed the process.

Commissioner Wicklund motioned and it was seconded by Schmidt to recommend that the Metropolitan Council extend the timeline for the rules used to distribute grants from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund beyond June 30, 2007 until such time as any changes to the rules are adopted by the Metropolitan Council.

With no further discussion, **the motion carried.**

Summer Tours/Business Meetings - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferud discussed memo provided outlining where MPOSC has held tours and business meetings in regional parks in the summer in the past several years and suggested places for two or three meetings/tours in August (August 7), and two in September (likely to be September 11 and September 18). Suggested places are: Big

Marine Park Reserve (per Washington County request), Phalen and Keller Regional Parks, and Elm Creek Park Reserve

Wicklund asked if Big Marine could happen at the regularly scheduled meeting in October as apposed to holding a second meeting in September. Stefferud stated that it could.

Skovholt stated that he liked the proposed sites and asked the Commission for their preference on 9/4 or 9/11. The Commission chose to meet on 9/11.

Stefferd confirmed that the proposed 9/18 meeting/tour would be held on October 2 (a regular meeting day for the Commission).

Botzek asked for a summarization of ‘dedicated funds’, if it were to pass. Stefferud discussed 14% of \$290 million for parks and trails, if enacted, would still need to be determined how it would be divided (by the Legislature). Botzek asked about the use of the money for acquisition vs. operation and maintenance. Stefferud stated he was not at any of those hearings, however, he understood that they left that open.

REPORTS

Chair: None.

Staff: Stefferud asked about moving the July 3rd meeting to July 10th due to the July 4th holiday. The Commission agreed to move the meeting to July 10, 2007.

Beckman stated that the Park Foundation Bill passed; however, we did not get a grant from the McKnight Foundation.

Commissioners: None

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, July 10, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. at 390 N. Robert Street, St. Paul, MN in Chambers (**note date change**).

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Skovholt adjourned the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle, Executive Secretary

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