

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

MEETING OF
METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

April 6, 2010

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

ABSENT: None.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Haas called the meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:00 p.m. on April 6, 2010.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

Commissioner Baines motioned and Commissioner Schmidt seconded to approve the April 6, 2010 Agenda and the March 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

Request to reallocate balance of Grant SG-2008-037 from completed Central Anoka County Regional Trail project to Grant SG-2008-051 for Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve development project, Anoka County - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferd discussed Anoka County's request to reallocate the balance of Grant SG-2008-037 to Grant SC-2008-051.

It was motioned by Commissioner Jabs and seconded by Commissioner Baines to recommend that the Metropolitan Council authorizes a reallocation of the \$43,917.60 balance in expired grant SG-2008-037 to grant SG-2008-051 to help finance unforeseen costs in constructing the campground visitor center at Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve, and directs Council staff to execute an amendment to grant SG-2008-051 that reflects this reallocation. **The motion carried.**

Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant request for Grey Cloud Island Regional Park, Washington County - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Steffered discussed the request from Washington County for Grey Cloud Island Regional Park for a Park Acquisition Opportunity Grant of \$1,470,253 to finance 75% of the cost to acquire a 43 acre parcel on the northeast side of Lower Grey Cloud Island within the boundary of Grey Cloud Island Regional Park.

Steffered explained how the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund is comprised of two accounts. The first account is called the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund Acquisition Account, which is used to purchase land with high quality natural resource characteristics. He noted that no residential structures can be acquired with this account. The second account is called the Parks and Trails Fund Acquisition Account, which is used to purchase land and any related structures – typically a parcel with a house or other buildings.

Haas asked about the Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund and asked if funds were appropriated through the LCCMR. Stefferud stated yes and reiterated that they are only used for high quality natural areas without structures on them.

Haas clarified that the Parks and Trails Acquisition Fund received appropriations in part from the Land and Legacy Amendment. Stefferud indicated that was correct and noted it also received bonds issued by the Metropolitan Council.

Schmidt clarified that the Environmental and Natural Resource Trust Fund money comes from Lottery in Lieu of Sales Tax funds.

Baines asked if this ‘split’ (of funding sources) is within standard practices. Stefferud stated that it is and noted however, that in the past we did not have a Parks and Trails Fund.

It was motioned by Commissioner Gamec and seconded by Commissioner Baines to recommend that the Metropolitan Council authorize a grant of \$1,470,253 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Washington County to partially finance the acquisition of the Appert parcel as part of Grey Cloud Island Regional Park. The grant should be financed with:

\$445,455 of Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund appropriations and \$296,970 of matching Metro Council bonds from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Acquisition Account to partially finance the undeveloped lots for this parcel.

\$436,697 of FY 2010 Parks and Trails Fund appropriations and \$291,131 of matching Metropolitan Council bonds from the Parks and Trails Fund Acquisition Account to partially finance the developed lot and associated acquisition costs for this parcel.

The motion carried.

Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Grant request for Above the Falls Regional Park, Minneapolis Park & Rec. Board - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferud discussed a request from the MPRB for a grant from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to finance a portion of the cost to acquire 3.57 acres on the east bank of the Mississippi River within the approved boundary of Above the Falls Regional Park. He noted that the area proposed for the grant is part of a 13.84 acres being sold by the Scherer Lumber Company.

Stefferud discussed estimated costs for environmental cleanup associated with the proposed site development and noted that the MPRB would seek environmental cleanup costs from sources specifically designed to finance soil contamination clean up including a Brownfield to Greenfield grant and a Hennepin County program.

Stefferud explained the acquisition cost analysis. He stated that the purchase agreement calls for an initial payment of \$400,000 and an additional payment of \$2,000,000 at closing. Stefferud stated that Scherer Brothers will carry a mortgage for the remaining balance with annual principal and interest payments over four years. The MPRB's request letter states that,

“The balance of the funding may come from a diverse list of sources including the sale of portions of the property to the private partners, I-35W land acquisition proceeds, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization funds, Metropolitan Council Regional Park funds, Parks and Trails funding and the City of Minneapolis.”

Wulff asked what happens if mortgage payments are not made.

Judd Reitkerk, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation, stated that they are working with the City of Minneapolis and proposing to sell the land to the City. Another option would be to sell the property to a private party.

Baines asked when the park land will be developed. Reitkerk stated that they are still developing a plan and hopes to have it done by August or September. He noted that construction would not likely begin this year.

Jabs asked what happens with contaminated soil. Reitkerk stated that it's mostly pavement, which would need to be removed anyway, then shoreline restoration would be done.

Baines asked if this will deplete the funds for the rest of the year in the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund. Stefferud explained that there will be an appropriation from the Legislature in July renewing this Fund.

It was motioned by Commissioner Jabs and seconded by Commissioner Lee to recommend:

1. That the Metropolitan Council authorize a grant of \$1,699,992 from the Parks and Trails Fund Acquisition Account in the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board to partially finance the acquisition of 3.57 acres of the Scherer Lumber property between vacated Water Street and the Mississippi River for Above the Falls Regional Park. The grant should be financed with the \$429,760 remaining balance of the FY 2010 Parks and Trails

2. That the Metropolitan Council inform the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board that the soil contamination in the 3.57 acres funded with the grant described above should be cleaned up with funds specifically programmed for such purposes. The Metropolitan Council's assistance to finance the acquisition of the 3.57 acres does not imply that the Council will grant park funds to clean up that land. Regional park grant funds will only be used for contaminated soil cleanup if conditions of Regional Parks Strategy 5 (c), points 2 through 5 have been met.
3. That the Metropolitan Council inform the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board that the rest of the Scherer Lumber property east of the vacated Water Street is not within the master plan boundary for Above the Falls Regional Park. Consequently, unless the Metropolitan Council approves an amendment to the park master plan to include additional land for the park, the land east of vacated Water Street would not be eligible for Metropolitan Council Regional Park funds or Parks and Trails funding.

Dinkel asked if we are premature with this motion. Stefferud explained that it is following the logical sequence set. Dinkel stated that he is concerned that the land to be sold to the City is not a 'done deal'. Stefferud noted that the MPRB is working with safeguards in place.

Jabs commented that he felt this purchase is a key piece for the Above the Falls Regional Park and needs to be purchased now. If it is not, it may be lost forever.

With no further discussed a vote was taken. **The motion carried.**

Update to 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan - Review of Policy Revisions - Ann Beckman, Manager-Regional Systems Planning and Growth Strategy

Beckman noted a recommendation could not be done without cost estimates, therefore the recommendation will be brought back at the May meeting.

Beckman reviewed changes/updates to the 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan. She suggested that in addition to today's discussion, folks could e-mail questions and concerns to her.

Schmidt noted that this is not the entire policy plan.

Baines asked what this document will go into. Beckman explained that it is a stand alone document and showed what the current one looks like. She noted that it is used when reviewing comprehensive plans and is also considered a chapter or portion of the Regional Development Framework.

Schmidt asked about Strategy 2 on page 3 – how are we clarifying priorities. Beckman stated that the agencies will set the priorities. Schmidt noted that this is a change from the last Policy Plan where the Metropolitan Council set the priorities.

Moeller asked if there is a policy regarding signage or a 'way finding system'. Beckman noted that there is not, but agencies are working on this. She stated that the Regional Park Foundation is also partnering with HealthPartners to increase funding for doing this.

Baines asked if the signage language needs to be put in this document. Beckman stated that it may be premature for this document. She believes there will be opportunities as connections are made to trails, i.e., using busses, connecting trails, etc.

Baines asked who will drive the need for signs. Beckman stated that it needs to come from the agencies.

Wulff noted that this is a popular topic at the local level as well.

Steve Sullivan, Dakota County Parks noted the importance of knowing when this document is ready for public comment. Beckman stated she is hoping it will be ready by July. There will be a 45 day comment period as well as a public hearing.

Moeller suggested that the document should state the policy of 'way finding/signage' will be deferred to individual agencies.

Scheduling off-site MPOSC Meetings/Tours for Summer 2010 - Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferud reviewed the history of parks toured in the past years and recommended that the following locations be scheduled for meetings and tours in 2010.

1. Lilydale-Harriet Island Regional Park—St. Paul. The MPOSC could meet at the Clarence Wigington pavilion for a business meeting, and then tour the park. Significant improvements to the park have been made with CIP grants and line-item appropriations. Plus the MPOSC could see the Lilydale portion of the park in context of the development master plan amendment the Commission considered earlier this year.
2. Theodore Wirth Regional Park—Mpls. Park & Rec. Board. The MPOSC could meet at the Wirth Chalet for a business meeting, and then tour the park focusing on the Wirth Beach area which is undergoing improvements from past and current grants funded through the Regional Parks CIP and Parks and Trails Fund appropriations.
3. Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park—Scott County. The MPOSC could meet at the picnic area, and then tour the park. This new park, which opened in June 2009, includes land that was acquired with a Park Acquisition Opportunity Grant, donation to the Regional Parks Foundation of the Twin Cities and land acquired from a residential developer as part of the County's approval of clustered residential development adjacent to the park.

Dates and times recommended for the meetings and tours are:

June 1, 4 to 6 p.m.

July 6, 4 to 6 p.m.

August 3, 4 to 6 p.m.

Schmidt asked if the Commission could tour more than one park per date. Stefferud stated that he would look into that.

Moeller suggested starting at 3pm if possible. The group agreed on the earlier start time and the suggested dates.

Stefferud stated that he will bring more logistics back to the next meeting including confirmation on dates and locations after consulting with the hosting regional park agencies.

REPORTS

Chair: Haas asked the Stefferud to give a brief overview of the ‘different pots of money’ or funding sources utilized. Stefferud gave a brief synopsis of the role as financial management of these funds. He also clarified other funding sources including Council bonds. In addition he explained operations and maintenance funding.

Commissioners: Moeller reported that he went to the ground breaking ceremony of Carver County Trail. Wulff stated that she will be speaking at the Spring Island Wildlife Management Area ribbon cutting ceremony this Thursday in Dakota County.

Staff: None

NEXT MEETING

May 4, 2010, beginning at 4pm in Room LLA.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle, Executive Secretary

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