

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

**MEETING OF
METROPOLITAN PARKS AND OPEN SPACE COMMISSION**

May 4, 2010

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

ABSENT: Richard Jabs, Tom Gamec, Bob Moeller

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/MINUTES

Commissioner Schmidt motioned and Commissioner Baines seconded to approve the May 4, 2010 Agenda and the April 6, 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

Amendment to 2010-11 Metropolitan Regional Parks Capital Improvement Program -Arne Stefferud, Planning Analyst-Parks

Stefferud discussed the requests that the Mpls. Park Board, Three Rivers Park District and Washington County have submitted to change how they would spend their portion of the 2010-11 Parks CIP. Grants for proposed projects can't be approved until the Parks CIP is amended to reflect these changes.

The Mpls. Park Board's request is to use \$1 million originally proposed for development at the Bohemian Flats portion of Mississippi Gorge Regional Park, and instead use it for development at the B. F. Nelson and Boom Island portion of Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park. The basis for the request is that the Park Board does not have access to the Bohemian Flats because part of it is still used to store remnants of the collapsed I-35 W bridge. This change complements funding already granted for Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park.

Three Rivers Park District's request is to use \$3,618,000 originally proposed to partially reimburse the Park District for its local funding to acquire land for Silverwood Special Recreation Feature, and instead

use it to renovate and expand the nature center at Elm Creek Park Reserve. The basis for this request is that the Park District can't use this money to pay off its bond debt for Silverwood Park Acquisition at this time, and instead could fully fund the renovation and expansion of the Elm Creek nature center. This change complements funding already granted for the nature center project.

Washington County's request is to use \$599,000 originally proposed to construct a maintenance facility at Big Marine Park Reserve for two projects:

- \$249,000 to complete St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park campground improvements
- \$350,000 to complete the Lake Elmo Park Reserve winter recreation area

The basis for this request is that the County is still working on the development master plan update for Big Marine Park Reserve and subsequently doesn't yet know where the maintenance facility should be located. The conceptual designs for the projects listed above and associated cost estimates indicate that additional funds are needed to complete these projects. This change complements funding already granted for these projects.

Stefferd described the requested changes and noted that these projects are consistent with Metropolitan Council approved master plans and complement other grants the Metro Council has provided for those projects.

Haas asked how the projects (that cannot be done now) will be funded when they are ready. Stefferud responded they would come from a future CIP.

Commissioner Baines motioned, and it was seconded by Commissioner Shlaferman to recommend that the Metropolitan Council approve the amendment to the 2010-11 Metropolitan Regional Parks CIP as shown on Table 1 (provided at the meeting). **The motion carried.**

Update to 2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan – MPOSC Recommendations on Proposed System Plan Changes – Jan Youngquist, Senior Planner, Parks

Youngquist presented Carver County's proposed additions to the regional park system. Other proposed system changes were presented and reviewed by MPOSC at its meetings in January through March of this year.

Youngquist stated that today we will look at all proposed regional parks and trails or study areas that the MPOSC reviewed and noted that it is the intent to have the MPOSC take action to recommend changes to the regional park system as part of the draft for hearing version of the park policy plan.

Beginning with Carver County, Youngquist described the three proposed system changes.

1. Extension of MN River Bluff's LRT Regional Trail
2. Union Pacific Corridor – Regional Trail Search Corridor
3. County Road 10 Regional Trail – Regional Trail search corridor.

Youngquist reviewed the first proposal and the criteria for regional trails and linking regional trails.

Haas asked the Commission for questions, seeing none, Youngquist continued with the second proposed system change.

Marty Walsh, Carver County explained that an offer was extended to Union Pacific for the appraised value of the land; however the railroad wanted far more money for the land. The Board plans to continue negotiations.

Baines asked about the ‘negotiations’ – at what point do you just step away. Walsh responded that the County Board is meeting next week to discuss the next steps.

Schmidt stated that if the railroad came to a reasonable figure, money would be needed ASAP. Walsh stated that emergency acquisition funds would be requested from the Board.

Youngquist stated that an ‘acquisition master plan’ could be done and once the property was bought, they could come back with a ‘development master plan’.

Youngquist discussed the third proposed system change.

Next, Youngquist explained that the requests have been grouped by agency. At this point, she reiterated that she is looking for recommendations from MPOSC.

GROUP 1-- ST. PAUL

P-1 Proposed Regional Park Study Area—Highland Park

Youngquist gave an overview of the proposal noting that designation as a regional park study area does not guarantee that the park would become part of the regional parks system, but would authorize Council staff to work with St. Paul to conduct visitor-origin studies to determine the regional distribution of visitation to the park. Once these studies are complete, information will be provided to MPOSC and the Council for evaluation.

Haas asked if this will be the responsibility of Council staff. Youngquist stated that staff would help develop the methodology for the studies.

Schmidt asked how Ramsey County visitors are counted when visiting St. Paul parks and vice-versa. Youngquist stated they would be counted as non-local visits.

Dinkel asked for clarification on the distinction of a local vs. a regional park. Youngquist reviewed the criteria for a park to be considered regional including size, usage, etc.

Schmidt asked about acreage included in regional parks where golf courses are concerned. Youngquist stated that those that supply other activities, i.e., cross country skiing in the winter, include the golf course in their acreage.

Lee asked for a definition of natural resource significance. Youngquist discussed the mix of regional and local activities provided.

Dinkel asked if approving this study costs the Council money. Youngquist explained that the Council will want to be involved to insure the correct methodology is used.

Baines stated that he finds considering Highland Park a regional park is a large stretch.

Commissioner Dinkel made a motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Lee to recommend that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission accept the St. Paul proposal P-1 to be incorporated into the draft *Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

Wulff commented that when she will have an opportunity to vote on this at the full Council, she does not see it as a regional park.

Haas called for a vote. **The motion carried**, with Dinkel, Lee, Shlaferman voting yes and Baines, Schmidt voting no.

T-1 Proposed Regional Trail Search Corridor—Ayd Mill Trail

Youngquist noted that this request has been withdrawn by the City of St. Paul.

T-2 Proposed Regional Trail Search Corridor—Johnson Parkway Trail

Youngquist gave an overview of the proposal and noted that with inclusion into the regional parks system, this trail would qualify for regional parks operations and maintenance funding and upon Council approval of a master plan, would be eligible for development funding through the regional parks capital improvement program. The trail would provide a connection between Phalen-Keller and Battle Creek-Indian Mounds Regional Parks and would recognize all of St. Paul's Grand Rounds as part of the regional parks system.

Commissioner Baines motioned and it was seconded by Commissioner Dinkel to recommend that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission accept the St. Paul proposal T-2 to be incorporated into the draft *Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

Haas called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

GROUP 2—WASHINGTON COUNTY

T-3 Proposed Regional Trail Search Corridor—Middle St. Croix Valley Trail

Youngquist gave an overview of the proposal and noted that with inclusion into the regional parks system, this trail would qualify for regional parks operations and maintenance funding and upon Council approval of a master plan, would be eligible for acquisition and development funding through the regional parks capital improvement program. This trail will connect to state, regional and local trails that will provide a continuous trail network following the St. Croix River from Stillwater to the border of Washington and Dakota counties.

Haas asked about acquisition of the Zephyr Line. John Elholm, Washington County Parks responded that the DNR is working on acquisition of this.

Baines asked if this trail search corridor is a rail corridor. Elholm stated that part is and part is not.

Youngquist clarified for new members the definition of search corridors noting that it is very vague looking at connecting 'point A to point B', etc. The alignment will be determined when the agency prepares a master plan for the trail.

Commissioner Baines motioned and it was seconded by Commissioner Schmidt to recommend that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission make a motion to accept the Washington County proposal T-3 to be incorporated into the draft *Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

Haas called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

T-4 Proposed Regional Trail —Point Douglas Trail

Youngquist gave an overview of the proposal and noted that with inclusion into the regional parks system, this trail would qualify for regional parks operations and maintenance funding and upon Council approval of a master plan, would be eligible for development funding through the regional parks capital improvement program. Washington County owns this destination trail corridor, which will provide the user with up-close views of the Mississippi River, and will facilitate connections to trails in Dakota County and Wisconsin.

Commissioner Baines motioned and it was seconded by Commissioner Shlaferman to recommend that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission make a motion to accept the Washington County proposal T-4 to be incorporated into the draft *Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

Haas called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

GROUP 3—THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

P-3 Proposed Special Recreation Feature—The Landing

Youngquist gave an overview of the proposal and noted that with inclusion into the regional parks system, The Landing would qualify for regional parks operations and maintenance funding. The Landing is already developed, but upon Council approval of a master plan, it would be eligible for funding of improvements through the regional parks capital improvement program. Special recreation features are unique facilities; there are currently 6 special recreation features in the regional parks system. The *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan* defines a special recreation feature as:

Area that preserves, maintains and provides specialized or single-purpose recreational activities such as golf course, nature center, marina, zoo, conservatory, arboretum, display gardens, arena, gun club, downhill ski area, and sites of historic or archeological significance.

The Landing may be considered a site providing historical significance. Visitation to The Landing is low compared to regional parks system facilities, although Three Rivers Park District anticipates that its change in operations removing the admission fee will draw more visitors to the park. Three Rivers indicates that 68 percent of visitors come from outside its taxing jurisdiction, with 28 percent of them coming from outside the seven-county metropolitan area. Based on this information, the Landing clearly demonstrates regional visitation patterns.

Haas asked about connecting trails to The Landing. Boe Carlson, Three River's Park District stated that there will be a number of connection opportunities.

Dinkel asked if there are historical features in other regional parks. Carlson discussed a number of historical features within other regional parks and noted that this would be the first 'stand alone' regional park featuring a historical site.

Dinkel noted that this is really a 'development' site. Carlson stated that by definition it is a site of historical /archeological significance that provides unique opportunities of enlightenment.

Youngquist discussed Mill Ruins in comparison, which is part of Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park of Minneapolis.

Schmidt asked if the buildings are new to this site and shared her concerns regarding what the activities would be. Carlson stated that there would be picnicking, walking, interpretive trails, biking, etc. He also noted that with the change in operation, it would be free to come in and see the historical sites. There would still be fee based tours for school groups, etc. as well as reservations taken for weddings, large gatherings, etc. The small fee would be to cover staff required to conduct tours, etc.

Schmidt asked what percentage of the site would be 'non-historical'. Carlson talked about the picnic areas, walking/biking trails, etc.

Shlaferman asked if there any educational opportunities, field trips, etc. Carlson stated absolutely, that most of their visits now are from school groups. It is the hope however that visitation will increase with free admission.

Shlaferman asked if The Landing is self supporting with the special program fees they charge. Carlson stated that they are. He said the challenge comes with restorative costs.

Baines stated that we've shown precedence with other educational opportunities.

Commissioner Baines motioned and it was seconded by Commissioner Shlaferman to recommend that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission accept the Three Rivers Park District proposal P-3 to be incorporated into the draft *Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

Dinkel stated he is concerned with where the Commission will stop.

Schmidt would like to see more work done on the definition of 'special recreation feature' and feels a precedence is being established.

Lee asked how The Landing came to be a part of Three Rivers Park District. Carlson stated that it was run by the City of Shakopee and the Historical Society and the Park District was asked to take it over.

Dinkel stated that he feels it is a historical site and not a park.

Schmidt stated that she would like to see it studied further.

Baines feels like they've done this before with Mill Ruins, Como Park, etc.

Schmidt stated she is still concerned with setting precedence.

Haas called for a vote. **The motion carried**, with Dinkel, Lee, Shlaferman, Baines voting yes and Schmidt voting no.

GROUP 4—RAMSEY COUNTY

P-4 Proposed Regional Park Boundary Adjustment—Vadnais Snail Lakes Regional Park

Youngquist gave an overview of the proposal and noted that the boundary adjustment to Vadnais Snail Lakes Regional Park would allow Island Lake County Park to qualify for regional parks operations and maintenance funding. Island Lake County Park is already developed; upon Council approval of a master plan, it would be eligible for funding of improvements through the regional parks capital improvement program.

Although Vadnais Snail Lakes is classified as a regional park, in many respects it serves as a park reserve, with large undeveloped areas protecting high-quality natural resources and small areas for recreation. By expanding its boundaries to include Island Lake County Park, more recreational opportunities will be provided to park visitors, specifically to visitors south of I-694. Island Lake County Park annually hosts a series of water-ski events conducted by the Minnesota Water-ski Association. These events have a regional draw.

Greg Mack, Ramsey County explained the alignment and trail connections.

Dinkel asked if there is cross country skiing and asked how Island Lake would qualify to be added. Youngquist stated that Island Lake would bring more recreational opportunities and provide connections.

Wulff stated her concern with limited total acreage without the golf course and noted that she feels it functions well as a county park. Youngquist clarified that it would not be a stand-alone regional park but would be an addition to the Vadnais Snail Lakes Regional Park.

Mack discussed the character of the parks in Ramsey County due to the high level of development and lack of large open green space. He noted that there are many connections/trail corridors that link open space.

Baines asked if there is a CIP for trails. Mack stated that once approved, a master plan will be developed describing various funding options.

Shlaferman motioned to recommend that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission make a motion to accept the Ramsey County proposal P-4 to be incorporated into the draft *Regional Parks Policy Plan*. **The motion failed, due to a lack of a second.**

Schmidt asked what the distance from Grass Lake is. Mack stated that it is about one mile. Schmidt asked what it would be without the proposed trail connection. Mack stated that it would be less than a mile.

Dinkel asked who manages the golf course. Mack stated that it is managed through a third party.

Haas suggested moving forward without a recommendation from this Commission.

Commissioner Dinkel motioned to NOT recommend that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission accept the Ramsey County proposal P-4 to be incorporated into the draft *Regional Parks Policy Plan*. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Lee.

Lee stated that he is concerned with the 694 disconnect.

Schmidt is concerned with the precedence and stated, “Why add a little park to a big park.”

Dinkel stated he doesn’t think we should conjoin a park to another just to make it eligible for regional funding when it’s operating well on its own.

Hass called for a vote. **The motion carried**, with Dinkel, Lee, Baines, Schmidt voting yes and Shlaferman voting no.

T-14 Proposed Regional Trail Search Corridor—Rice Creek South Trail

Youngquist gave an overview of the proposal and noted with inclusion into the regional parks system, this trail would qualify for regional parks operations and maintenance funding and upon Council approval of a master plan, would be eligible for development funding through the regional parks capital improvement program. Ramsey County hopes to have the trail corridor, wildlife corridor and trailhead property transferred to them from the federal government at no cost prior to the public auction for the TCAAP site. This trail will provide connections between the Rice Creek North and Highway 96 Regional Trails as well access to winter recreational activities on the Arden Hills Army Training Site. This proposal provides an opportunity to build a regional trail adjacent to a large-scale future development of housing, offices and retail establishments.

Baines reviewed past discussions regarding clean up and asked who would be responsible. Youngquist noted that the entire site is not contaminated and that there are however ‘hot spots’. Mack stated that it is a complicated piece of property. He stated that there are areas identified that need to be cleaned up to an ‘industrial level’, which is a standard set by MPCA and the EPA. He noted that the Army is obligated to do the clean up. He stated that they are meeting with the MPCA, the EPA and the Army to discuss these issues. He also reiterated that they have selected areas with the least amount of contamination to be included in the search corridor.

Baines stated his concern is unspent rounds left on the site. Mack stated that those have already been removed.

Dinkel clarified that it is the army's responsibility for clean up. Mack stated that it is, to an industrial level. Youngquist discussed strategies for contaminated lands and reviewed criteria.

Mack stated that when negotiating with the EPA, MPCA and the Army, they defined the level (industrial) that the Army would be responsible to restore the land to. They would also be responsible for any future problems found that would deem lands to be below this (industrial) level standard. Any cleanup beyond this standard would not be their responsibility. Mack commented that this was a very high standard however.

Baines asked if the contamination was in the surface water only or in the aquifer. Mack stated that it is in the aquifer.

Haas asked if the City of Arden Hills has parkland dedication fees. Mack stated that they do, however it serves more of the local park needs. He noted however that there have been some coordination efforts with the regional parks as well.

Wulff shared her concern that the trail would run too close to the Lexington Avenue trail and did not see the need for two trails, or the obligation to maintain two trails. Mack stated that they are 1.5 miles apart. While the Lexington trail would be more of a connecting trail, running along a roadway, the proposed trail would be more scenic, running through natural areas.

Commissioner Dinkel motioned and it was seconded by Commissioner Lee to recommend that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission make a motion to accept the Ramsey County proposal T-14 to be incorporated into the draft *Regional Parks Policy Plan*. **The motion carried.**

Haas recommended a 5 min. recess.

T-15 Proposed Regional Trail Extension—Trout Brook Regional Trail

Youngquist gave an overview of the proposal and noted with inclusion into the regional parks system, this trail would qualify for regional parks operations and maintenance funding and upon Council approval of a master plan, would be eligible for acquisition and development funding through the regional parks capital improvement program. The proposed extension of the Trout Brook Regional Trail would create a continuous trail with connections to the Sam Morgan Regional Trail in downtown St. Paul, the Trillium Nature Sanctuary, the Bruce Vento Regional Trail, the Gateway State Trail, Lake McCarrons County Park in Roseville and Vadnais-Snail Lakes Regional Park in Vadnais Heights.

Commissioner Dinkel motioned and it was seconded by Commissioner Lee to recommend that the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission make a motion to accept the Ramsey County proposal T-15 to be incorporated into the draft *Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

Baines reviewed the discussion of this Commission regarding the close proximity of this trail to another trail. Youngquist stated that the parallel trails are 2-3 miles apart, which meets the criteria.

Haas called for a vote. **The motion carried.**

Haas at this point, suggested a second meeting in May to complete today's agenda. Beckman stated that members will be polled via e-mail to find a date that will work in late May.

REPORTS

- **Chair - None**
- **Commissioners - None**
- **Staff –Upcoming Regional Workshops on Parks and Trails Legacy Plan**

Arne Stefferud provided information about participating in one of 17 workshops to be held around the state in May and June to help chart the course of regional and state parks and trails for the next 25 years as part of the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan. People unable to attend a workshop, can provide input on the Citizen's League Web site at www.citizing.org.

NEXT MEETING

Chair Haas recommended a Special Meeting in May to complete today's Agenda. Staff will poll members to coordinate a date that works for all.

Baines asked for clarification of meeting dates for the summer. At this point the dates will be June 8, July 6, and August 3. All meetings will start at 3pm at various park locations followed by a tour. Directions will be included with agendas sent prior to each of these meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandi Dingle, Executive Secretary

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