



PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of August 12, 2015

Central Hillside Center
12 E 4th St



1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:02 pm.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Commissioners Albright, Contardo, Crosby, Hall, Schmidt, Schraepfer, Torch and Wodash
NOT PRESENT: Commissioners Breeuwer, Holak and Welles

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Contardo motioned for approval of the July 8, 2015, meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Schraepfer. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Presentations

A. Revised Duluth Children's Outdoor Charter –Tim Bates, UMD Outdoor Rec Program

Tim Bates presented a revised Charter that also included principles. There are minor changes that help clarify the Charter without changing the intent.

Motion to support the Duluth Children's Outdoor Charter by Commissioner Contardo; seconded by Commissioner Schraepfer. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Eastern Dog Park adjacent to City Maintenance Facility on Riley Rd –Luke Sydow, SAS+Associates (action requested)

Luke Sydow gave an overview of the proposed Riley Road Dog Park near the Jean Duluth Soccer Complex. The site is nearly 4 acres and is currently being used as an hay field. The Superior Hiking Trail and a snowmobile trail are nearby, along with a model airplane area and UMD agriculture station. The site will include areas for small and large dogs, a series of benches and waste bag dispensers, trash cans and 13-car gravel parking lot. No cost estimates have been conducted yet.

Kathy Bergen noted all costs associated with the dog park are community fundraised however, the City will provide time and supplies for the parking lot. Efforts are being taken to keep costs to a minimum. The proposed dog park will be the largest in the City once completed.

Commissioner Wodash asked about location selection and ownership. It was clarified the City has owned the property for many years but it was within Rice Lake township and a permit was required. Previous attempts to create a dog park there were denied. The area is now part of the City of Duluth and no permit is needed to create the dog park.

Discussion was held concerning an email from Mr. Jamie Harvey regarding land use for farming. Mr. Harvey mentioned the importance of any land development not degrading the quality of the soil through bringing in fill. Mr. Harvey conversed with the Mayor and Councilor Sipress about using the land for a sustainable farming project. It was determined to bring the topic to the Parks division for further conversation.

There is additional field area that will not be developed into a dog park that could be used for agriculture. The City has not explored other uses for the land and no divisions expressed knowledge of other activities.

President Hall reviewed public comments with 37 in favor of the dog park and 1 objection.

Motion made by Commissioner Contardo to approve the plans for Riley Road, as presented, as the future site of a dog park, predicated on funding of infrastructure costs being raised by volunteers; seconded by Commissioner Schraepfer. Motion passed unanimously.

C. West Duluth Sports Corridor Mini-Master Plan –Bryan Harjes, HKGi (action requested)

Mr. Harjes provided an overview of project goals and objectives. He outlined in detail the concepts for the Wheeler and Wade areas and also the context of the nearby, privately owned, Heritage Sports Complex.

A place for an indoor field still needs to be identified. There is no area suitable in this mini-master plan. Cost would exceed \$5 million and it would displace existing facilities (ball field #5 and the skate park). Other areas within the City have not been identified as the facility and parking would take up significant space.

Wade is primarily looking to upgrade existing fields, allow space for trails and expand parking.

Immediate priorities (Phase 1) for Wheeler consist of expansion, field and tennis court upgrades and diversifying park uses. Cost is significant and prioritization will be critical. Phase 2 looks at maintenance buildings and upgrading fields and parking. \$1.6 million of the \$1.8 million slotted for Phase 2 is needed for parking. The entire project is estimated at \$4.2 million.

President Hall asked if there was an anticipated timeline for each phase. It is too early in the process to begin to speculate on timelines. A lot depends on project partners and the ability to secure matching funds.

Commissioner Albright questioned whether the City considered options for non-paved lots as possible cost savings. Maintenance costs are higher with non-paved lots. Non-paved would be a nominal savings.

Does the City have the ability to determine need/demand for fields, more specifically a dome? Mr. Harjes did an examination of space requirements for a dome and adjacent parking. It was very difficult to find a best scenario. Heritage Center is an option but comes with parking challenges.

Ms. Bergen referenced a previously discussed dome on DWP Round House area. The Round House proved to be too small in addition to it being a contaminated site. Many different sites have been discussed over the years. Commissioner Albright feels there isn't a sense of overall demand of fields across the City. Ms. Bergen reported the overwhelming response from groups has been not to take away fields. Visit Duluth has formed a group to look at an indoor facility concept with multiple stakeholders (colleges, City of Proctor, etc.). There is a lot of interest because of possible tournaments, but the group has just begun to meet. Parks staff

members attend these meetings.

Commissioner Schmidt inquired at what point in the project projections will be made regarding upkeep and maintenance. Mr. Harjes asserted projections could be made in the next phase. Cost estimate can be made going forward. President Hall would like to know what the City is currently spending. Ms. Bergen reported most of the proposed facilities already exist, therefore most of the maintenance costs will remain the same.

Mr. Filby Williams addressed the principal problem as capital renewal, not maintenance and proposed the question of how to keep up and manage maintenance going forward.

President Hall asked where funding will come from. Mr. Filby Williams stated the first \$1 million are to be ½ & ½ tourism tax funds with an equal local match. In addition, much of the work will be done by in-kind service through City staff or nonprofits to renew facilities. He also suggested stadium renewal and parking lot work could be packaged together for a future state funding request.

Commissioner Contardo questioned if there is enough demand for 10 fields. Ms. Bergen replied generally yes. User groups do pay for use of fields. Baseball and softball fields are also utilized for soccer and flag football. Softball numbers are down but that could be partly due to the age of facilities.

Commissioner Wodash questioned whether or not there are going to be pedestrian crossings. Yes, they will be put in at 36th and 34th Avenues with enhanced sidewalks. 35th Avenue intersection could also be considered.

Councilor Sipress voiced concern about housing loss. There's a significant shortage of housing, especially affordable housing. If the entire master plan is completely implemented, what is the total housing loss? Loss of four residences (one rental, three owner occupied). Did others raise concern about this? Ms. Bergen stated there was discussion at the public meetings about the loss of housing. If more than four units were proposed for acquisition then we would need to come up with plans to replace them with similar types of housing.

Mr. Filby Williams emphasized these are living documents. Currently there is no consensus on where an indoor facility is needed, though there is agreement that one is needed. The \$5 M price tag for a single field is incredibly high. He feels private capital is needed to help make this happen. The City has a ball field fund to do modest capital maintenance. It is currently accumulating funding for Wade. There's a growing temptation to use that fund for other purposes than holding on to it to replace the artificial turf at Wade when it comes time. There may be a need to come to the Commission to discuss this.

Discussion on permit and use fees. Fees go to support maintenance of those facilities. Some have dedicated funds only for those sites (Bayfront, Wade, Wheeler). President Hall asked if we recently looked at raising fees. Ms. Bergen reported the fees were raised last fall. Fees are for group or league use, not for individual use.

Commissioner Albright moved that the Parks Commission support the conceptual plan for Wheeler/Wade as presented and will anticipate an opportunity to review the final plan before it is presented to Council. Seconded by Commissioner Schmidt; motion passed unanimously.

- D. US Steel Site - Final cleanup plan and future implications–Erin Endsley (MPCA) and Jim Filby Williams (informational)

The City owns a 4 mile long stretch of river front, 2 miles of which is the former US Steel site. The City wants to extend the Western Waterfront Trail to Boy Scout Landing and onto Jay Cooke State Park. Jim Filby Williams gave an overview of plans for trail extension. The site has 600 undeveloped acres that will soon be restored.

The City has a lease with the Lake Superior and Mississippi Rail Road (LMSRR) for the use of the tracks for 30 years. No prior plans referenced retention of rail line. All have referenced conversion of this right of way from rail to trail. People have begun to appreciate what would be lost. Six to nine thousand people per year utilize this service. The City is committed to providing public input to this use.

Erin Endsley from the MPCA and project manager for the superfund site spoke about two remaining clean up options and the trade-offs associated with each.

Twelve alternative plans were developed and two (alternative 8 and 12) are most likely to move forward based on stakeholder input. No decisions have been made yet. An overview of the cleanup site was given and goals and considerations for cleanup options were also presented. Alternative plan 12 is preferred by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa as part of their 1854 treaty rights to help restore wild rice beds. Impact will involve moving more material on land.

Impacts to City Property

- There will be no access during construction.
- Confined disposal will impact view sheds.
- Creation of new land options.
- Wire Mill Pond – could provide for open water but would require loss of City land.

A public meeting will be held in the fall with further developed design plans. An overview of clean up techniques was provided. Berms will look more natural. Alternative 12 would be great for wild rice, but limited for recreational uses. Larger berm will look quite unnatural. The City wants to explore a more hybrid option that allows for both recreational and wild rice bed options.

Two big decisions the City has to make (Jim Filby Williams):

1. Which alternative do we prefer – deadline of August 28th. From the City perspective, Alternative 8 creates a large waterfront peninsula park and has new water that will create recreational opportunities.
2. The City needs to negotiate compensation with US Steel for damage to land and lack of access.

The Administration is looking to the Parks and Recreation Commission and Council for input on future use of land: convert to trail, keeping rail line, or some other alternative. US Steel owes for damage to City property and closing off access for construction. It is reasonable to expect them to restore rail and possibly negotiate alternative for recreation without rail. It is not realistic for US Steel to pay for an option preserving the rail and creating recreation.

The City will deal with alternative options administratively. A decision on future land use will need to be completed within 3 months. Work would begin Spring 2016 at the earliest.

During the first few years of the LMSRR there was no cash support from the City, only occasional capital project support. Currently the City provides \$20,000 a year in tourism tax support.

Tribal consultation will continue throughout the process. This happens between Federal and Tribal governments.

Timing of the decision is partly based on US Steel. LMSRR representatives expressed frustration at lack of communication from the City. Mr. Filby Williams stated when we received information and communication we shared that with LMSRR. The City has heard from the EPA, MPCA and US Steel that we do not have the time for a lengthy public input process.

Numerous comments were made in support of maintaining the rail line.

Mike Casey (River Corridor Coalition-RCC) appreciates the Wire Mill Pond options. All plans that he has seen have included the rail line. The RCC wants the Western Waterfront Trail to co-exist with the train.

5. Commission Committees

A. Parks and Facilities – no report

Chair – Michael Schraepfer – Jon Welles, Ed Hall, John Schmidt, [Dale Sellner]

B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: no report

Chair – Ed Hall – Jon Welles, Erik Torch, [Kathy Bergen]

C. Trails and Bikeways –

Chair – Tom Albright - Andy Holak, Tiersa Dodge, [Judy Gibbs]

Name submission process for the Lowell to Lakewalk Trail; three options available at some point in September.

Naming of Duluth Traverse trails in Mission Creek.

D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult) – no report

Chair - Jon Welles – Andy Holak, Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby, [Pamela Page]

6. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Discussion about confusion regarding match requirements for St. Louis River Corridor versus legacy funding received. Discussion regarding changes to distribution of Legacy Funding starting this year.

7. New Business

None

8. Old Business

A. Future of Lake Superior Zoo

Zoo Executive Board met with City staff recently.

- B. Ongoing Maintenance of Duluth's parks, playgrounds, public gardens and trails Ad-Hoc committee has met and will be meeting with Dale Sellner later this month.

9. Division Manager's Report

- A. Updates on SLRC projects - handout
- B. Playground improvements at Central Hillside Park have been happening.
- C. Ms. Bergen has agreed to delay her retirement until the end of September as the process to hire a new Parks Manager continues.

10. Adjournment:

Commissioner Albright made a motion to adjourn, second by Commissioner Schraepfer, unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm.

11. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held 5 pm, Wednesday, September 9, at Central Hillside Center.

MOTION(S)

1. Motion to support the Duluth Children's Outdoor Charter by Commissioner Contardo; seconded by Commissioner Schraepfer. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Motion made by Commissioner Contardo to approve the plans for Riley Road, as presented, as the future site of a dog park, predicated on funding of infrastructure costs being raised by volunteers; seconded by Commissioner Schraepfer. Motion passed unanimously.
3. Commissioner Albright moved that the Parks Commission support the conceptual plan for Wheeler/Wade as presented and will anticipate an opportunity to review the final plan before it is presented to Council. Seconded by Commissioner Schmidt; motion passed unanimously.