



PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of December 9, 2015

Central Hillside Center
12 E 4th St



1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:04 pm.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Commissioners Tjaard Breeuwer, Patrick Contardo, Amanda Crosby, Ed Hall, Andy Holak, John Schmidt, Michael Schraepfer, Erik Torch, Jon Welles and Tiersa Wodash

NOT PRESENT: Commissioner Tom Albright

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Contardo motioned for approval of the November 4th meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Breeuwer. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Presentations

A. Resolution commending Mayor Don Ness for his vision, dedication and leadership

President Hall motioned to support resolution; second by Commissioner Welles. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Sports Tourism Project –Anne Bubacz Hamann, Director of Sports at Visit Duluth (informational)

Ms. Hamann came to provide an overview of a new initiative at Visit Duluth. The community has seen sports tourism in Duluth boom over the past several years, and Visit Duluth has launched a new department to focus on this sector. Participates with 14 other cities to promote this sector of tourism. Many calls from community members seeking support for a multi-sport indoor facility. Sports Council has been meeting since April 2015 to address need for indoor sports facility to sustain current tournaments and meet the need for indoor practice space. Approached by consulting company to assess types of facility that would work best in a community and provide funding strategies. Currently do not have funds available to support the study (\$28,000), but see the value of it. Proposal is about developing a strategic plan. Nowhere in document does it explore the feasibility of a facility. Will this give us what we need? It should be focused enough that we have a clear sense of the direction we should go.

President Hall pointed out the proposal doesn't focus on multi-sport complex, is that a second phase? Haman commented they are willing to be very flexible on scope. They worked with Eau Claire in the past and have had a good experience. Hall asked how the Commission can help with this. Ms. Hamann reported Visit Duluth's relationship with sports is new, many other cities have a strong relationship with parks and recreation. Of the \$28,000 needed for the study, she asked if there might be any assistance raising any of that at this time? Made a request to the city for tourism dollars used for this, not sure if that will come through.

Commissioner Holak feels this is a positive step, not much closer to getting a facility but step in right direction. Economics are a huge factor on if we can make this work. Need to be a public-private partnership. Believes the city should support this as a quality of life enhancement and more than just a tourism draw.

Commissioner Wodash asked if consultants help with actually raising the money, or just give suggestions. Just suggestions based on key stakeholder conversation.

Contardo asked if the facility was envisioned to be located on parks land. No site has been identified yet.

Mr. Filby Williams acknowledges that the demand for this is unmistakable. The cost is a significant challenge that the City itself cannot meet. The city has not championed the project because it sees that there needs to be a broader community wide effort to make it happen. City will be a partner of this process. Waiting to see if a broader coalition of community interest convenes. City will be a co-leader of the process.

President Hall hopes this can be a partnership between City and Visit Duluth.

Hamann professes Visit Duluth would welcome that. Mr. Filby Williams states as our city faces ongoing challenge of relatively flush tourism tax proceeds and lean general fund, it also sees the compelling case to figure out how to make use of tourism tax dollars to meet the needs of citizens and enhance the tourist experience. There is profound overlap in meeting both needs with this.

C. 2016 Parks & Recreation Budget –Lindsay Dean, Parks & Recreation Manager, Erik Birkeland, Property & Facilities Manager, Dale Sellner, Park Maintenance Supervisor (informational)

Ms. Dean prefaced that the budget has not been approved by City Council yet. Gave overview of parks department organizational chart. They will add 1 full time employee in 2016 to support SLRC projects. Will spend \$2.7M, primarily in staffing costs. Other services and charges include \$150K for AmeriCorps and funding for youth development programs. Revenue mainly from \$2.6M in property taxes, other income comes from fees and permits.

Key activities in 2016:

- Continue SLRC planning and implementation
- Retirements and secession. Two possible retirements
- Roll out of automated permitting process.
- Secure vulnerable properties.
- Improve communication and coordination with maintenance.

Mr. Sellner appreciates the support from the Commission. Excited to see that they will be able to send out a trail crew next year. In past mainly focused on trees because of lack of staffing. Gave overview of how new \$500,000 would be allocated to support maintenance work. First time they will get temporary workers from general fund, always came from referendum in the past.

Initiatives are to create a roving crew to groom ball fields & neighborhood parks work group for clean-up, mowing and repair.

In 2016 there will be a new trail maintenance work group. Forestry work group will continue. Discussed briefly some of the Emerald Ash Borer work they will undertake. Will be improving coordination and better work order system.

Mr. Birkeland, Property and Facilities Manager. Not solely focused on parks, manage all the City's property and facilities. Manage the largest amount of projects outside of Streets Department. Have 148 buildings. Self-perform a lot of the work, and also contract out what we

aren't able to address ourselves. Budget is largely salaries and materials. Pays utility bills for 2/3 of buildings. Revenue comes from rental fees, land sales and inter-fund transfers.

2016 priorities:

- Implement work order system
- Complete park facility assessment
- Solidify property services
- Begin multi-year conservation investment
- Develop strategic facility capital plan

Capital Projects:

- \$8 million planned, \$7m in SLRC.

Gave an overview of revenue sources and projects planned for 2016.

Commissioner Breeuwer asked about the significant decrease in rental income. We rented space to St. Louis County for a renovation project. The revenue fluctuates.

Councilor Sipress stated we can't overestimate significance of \$500,000 in additional maintenance funding. Commission made a big difference in making that happen. \$300K from general fund is possible from economic growth in city. Rest from tourism tax. Is this the first time we've used tourism tax revenue for maintenance?

Mr. Filby Williams claimed we've dedicated a small percentage to general fund operations, but it was untargeted. It has not been proportionate to how important areas like Lakewalk are to tourism.

President Hall asked if we will look at fee charges this year. Ms. Dean said yes, it is important to emphasize that this \$500,000 in parks maintenance funding will leverage \$8 million in support.

City does business planning every 3 years, and it is time for a new plan. Those divisions that have impact on citizens like parks and libraries often plan outside this timeline.

- D. Skyline Parkway Corridor Management Plan-Andy Hubley, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, Kelly Fleissner, Maintenance Operations Manager. (informational)

City Council has brought to attention feelings that City has not done enough to maintain Skyline Parkway, especially views. Council authorized support to restore views. City has not made progress on this, and Mr. Filby Williams is working to understand the challenges that led to this. He wants to connect with elected and appointed officials to clarify city policy. The presentation this evening is a first major step on this. This is an informational item, no action is requested this evening. Important role of Commission is to be a public venue to air and clarify public opinions and issues about Skyline.

Andy Hubley, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission: ARDC completed a 2003 management plan, updated this year. ARDC has extensive experience with Scenic Byways. Primary goal of updating the plan was to get byways more active in seeking federal funds. Not many applications come from MN. Gave overview of plan elements and process. Surprised at the number of projects completed in plan. Developed an interactive story map that shows detail and video of all the features of the parkway.

Updated management plan. Projects identified and implementation framework developed. Greatly enhanced presence on social media (Facebook). Recommendation on vegetation removal and addressing maintenance needs of waysides. Mr. Filby Williams: how has parkway experience evolved over time, especially with views? Hubley: all about views, purpose of the parkway. Vegetation has changed, so have adjacent property owners. Need to manage for attractiveness and erosion controls.

Mr. Filby Williams: core message to Commission is Skyline is a critically important parks asset, this division primarily takes care of this. He senses that the responsibilities for governing and acting on the Parkway has not been clear to staff. Parks Master plan did not address Parkway. There is disconnect between the emphasis on land use plan and lack of resources to maintain it.

Councilor Sipress: Skyline parkway is part of our parks system. If you've driven it lately, you'll notice significant deterioration of views along the parkway. This was catalyst to devote attention to its maintenance. Views are the most important asset.

Mr. Filby Williams gave an overview of skyline vegetation management policies in city code and plans. Councilor Gardner inquired about the prioritization of restoration. Mr. Filby Williams responded that we will check in to the prioritization.

How much St. Louis County land is on corridor? Significant amount of tax forfeited land.

Mr. Fleissner: What can we get done next year? Set up criteria to help make those decisions. Full time tree crew will be able to address the needs that will be prioritized. Discussed guidelines that would inform work plan.

Gave overview of 2016 work plan and using 500 block of skyline as a demonstration project. Sometimes abandoned overlooks are abandoned for a reason: safety, dumping, etc, which need to be evaluated before they are reopened.

Councilor Sipress: Likes approach of looking for low hanging fruit. Would prefer focusing more on open overlooks as opposed to abandoned ones.

Mr. Filby Williams asked why the City of Duluth never adopted the plan and what the proper body is to make that decision.

Councilor Sipress is not sure why it was never submitted for approval. There is ambiguity related to the fact it was never approved. He believes it's worth Parks commission reviewing and recommending adoption to council.

Bill Majeswki was on staff at time of original plan and he retired just before it was finished. He thinks it was between administrations that caused it to not get adopted. Hubley responded that it's not normal to have a formal adoption process.

Bob Kunze: I've lived on skyline for 35 years. Participated in process, just couldn't find leadership to get it going. Had lots of volunteers, funding and could not find anyone within city who was willing to take responsibility for the plan.

President Hall: finds it appropriate to have Parks Commission look at it, and thinks there are several pressing issues that makes it worth doing soon. Mr. Filby Williams: this plan is embedded in many other city plans and documents.

Corey Kesik – lived below skyline for 23 years. Happened in past where trees were taken down and it caused significant erosion.

Mike Casey – echoed need to control erosion following any tree removal.

Commissioner Breeuwer – Skyline is a city park. Aren't we required to have a mini-master plan like for other parks? Mr. Filby Williams: no, there's not a requirement to do that. But as a matter of good practice and know it's an important asset it behooves us to address the needs in a plan.

President Hall recommends the e-board come up with a plan to look at this.

Councilor Sipress added vegetation management needs to happen in an ecologically sound manner.

E. Naming Nomination for 2 Ball Fields – Jim Filby Williams (action requested)

John Baggs Little League Fields (behind Wade) and Dick Swanson Fields

Motion by Commissioner Breeuwer to rename the Little League fields behind Wade Stadium the "John Baggs Little League Fields" and to rename the two softball fields next to Wade Stadium the "Dick Swanson Fields." Second by Commissioner Crosby. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Dean gave overview of involvement of renaming with parks commission.

Mr. Filby Williams stated that the Indigenous Commission came forward with a proposal to give an Ojibwe name to Lake Place Park. There is an interest in adopting Ojibwe names for other parks in the City. Mr. Filby Williams stated an interest in this being a collaborative process between Commissions. Ms. Dean and Mr. Filby Williams will be meeting with the Indigenous Commission in the near future to discuss.

Mr. Filby Williams also noted that he will be asking for support for a Lakewalk mini-master plan in the future.

5. Commission Committees

A. Parks and Facilities – meeting date: TBA

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

No update.

B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Ed Hall – Jon Welles, Erik Torch, [Lindsay Dean]

No update.

C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Tom Albright - Andy Holak, Tiersa Dodge, Art Johnston, Tjaard Breeuwer, Eric Viken, [Judy Gibbs]

No update.

- D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult) – meeting date: TBA
Chair - Jon Welles – Andy Holak, Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby, [Pamela Page]

No update.

6. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

None given.

7. New Business

- A. Chambers Grove Park Flood Recovery Improvements Project

Received legacy grant. Restoration work is done, now will start renovation planning.

- B. Recreation Management Software System

Received funding to automate system in 2016. Very excited about moving from paper and pencil to a fully automated system. RFP is released will come before commission in February, Council in April and hope to have a beta version by the end of May. Put huge emphasis on training and support in RFP to help with this.

- C. Taskforce for April Annual Meeting

April 13th is planned date. Meeting with Mayor –elect to discuss her availability to participate.

Need to elect new officers in January. Welles and Holak have agreed to be nominating committee.

8. Old Business

- A. Update on U.S. Steel Negotiation

Hoping to achieve consensus as early as January. Will resume negotiations afterwards regarding post clean up restoration.

- B. Update on Lake Superior Zoo/Fairmount Park Planning

Design agreement signed for forest discovery zone and polar shores. First meeting is next week. Received preliminary encouraging analysis that replacement of culverts on railway with bridges will lower height of floodplain in park and allow for a possible repurposing of polar shores.

- C. Update on St. Louis River Corridor

Brief updates on planning meetings scheduled in the near future.

- D. Irving Park Mini-Master Plan

9. Public Comments

- A. Mike Casey – Cross City Trail meeting is tomorrow, encourages commission to come out to it. Prefer the alignment, here to demonstrate it via a website after the meeting. Mr. Filby Williams: asked if exec committee has endorsed an alignment over others? Yes, but are still seeking public input.

10. Adjournment:

Commissioner Holak made a motion to adjourn, second by Commissioner Welles. Meeting adjourned at 7:34 pm.

11. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held 5 pm, Wednesday, January 13, 2016, at Central Hillside Center.

MOTIONS

1. President Hall motioned to support resolution commending Mayor Don Ness for his vision, dedication and leadership. Second by Commissioner Welles. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Motion by Commissioner Breeuwer to rename the Little League fields behind Wade Stadium the "John Baggs Little League Fields" and to rename the two softball fields next to Wade Stadium the "Dick Swanson Fields." Second by Commissioner Crosby. Motion passed unanimously.