



# PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



## I. Call Meeting to Order

President Schmidt called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

## II. Roll Call

Present: John Schmidt, Amanda Crosby, Erik Torch, Dudley Edmondson, Michael Schraepfer, Dean Vogtman, Dennis Isernhagen, Kristin Bergerson, Britt Rohrbaugh, Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison), Art Johnston (ISD 709 Liaison)

Absent: Tiersa Wodash, Tjaard Breeuwer, Frank Jewell (St. Louis County Board Liaison)

## III. Approval of May 10 and June 14 Meeting Minutes

President Schmidt welcomed everyone and recited the poem ‘*Summer Yard*’ by Connie Wanek. Mentioned that at the June 14<sup>th</sup> meeting he requested copies of the 2010 Master Plan for new Commissioners and would like to spend time each meeting to focus on the plan’s guiding principles. Recited objective one and its guiding principles:

- Provide Safe, Clean, Fun and Beautiful Parks
  - Park access and upkeep – increase the level of upkeep and improve access
  - Invest, not expand – favor maintenance over reconstruction of existing infrastructure
  - Park investment – prepare an asset management plan
  - Enforcement and regulation – improve awareness and enforcement of park regulations
  - Four-season use – ensure year-round use of parks and recreation facilities

Commissioner Torch motioned for approval of May 10, 2017 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Edmondson. Unanimously approved.

Schmidt: Recounted last month’s presentation from Tracie Clanaugh and Melody David-McKnight which focused on the AmeriCorps and Youth Outdoors-Duluth programs. Acknowledged that when asked how the Commission could help support their efforts, Ms. Clanaugh indicated continued financial support and park improvements, which helps them provide more opportunities for youth.

Schmidt: Requested that on page nine of the June 14, 2017 minutes, his comment regarding the public meeting be edited to read as follows, “Discussed the comment made at last night’s public meeting which brought up concerns about potentially diverting money from restoration to recreation.”

Commissioner Torch motioned for approval of the June 14, 2017 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Rohrbaugh. Unanimously approved.

Schmidt: Referred to the feedback he has received requesting clarification on the policies for public comment, including the appropriate time period. Recommended that public comments do not exceed three minutes. Requested speakers print their name and topic on the public sign-in sheet



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



provided, noting its importance for taking accurate minutes.

#### IV. Presentations

##### A. Tabled Zoo Parks Fund Grant Request - Jim Filby Williams (informational)

Williams: Informed President Schmidt and Commissioners that the Zoological Society has asked to withdraw their application. Requested the Parks Commission return this grant request to Administration, with no intent to take further action.

Schmidt: Questioned whether the Commission was being asked to vote.

Joel Sipress (City Council President): Explained that because the Commission and topic were relatively informal, the request could simply be returned to Administration.

Schmidt: Recommended, as chair of the Parks Commission, that the grant request be returned to Administration.

##### B. Announcement of Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies - Jim Filby Williams (informational)

Williams: Reported they have reached the point of celebration with many of the park restoration and constructions projects, sharing three upcoming celebrations:

- Duluth Traverse Segment at Lincoln Park Middle School
  - July 21, 2017
- Hartley Park Improvements and Old Hartley Road ADA accessibility
  - Event date to be determined, likely late September
- Chambers Grove Ribbon Cutting
  - Event date to be determined, likely end of August

Williams: Indicated that formal invitations will be sent to the Parks Commission and Community Leaders.

##### C. Youth and Community Involvement- Russ Salgy, Valley Youth Center Executive Director (informational)

Salgy: Apologized for not utilizing a PowerPoint presentation. Explained his involvement with Valley Youth Center and explained their mission is to give kids all they need to succeed in the afterschool and summertime. Continued by explaining many come to them in despair and anger, but through play with qualified staff their behavior begins to change and they start feeling better about themselves and their lifestyle changes. Described the local ties Valley Youth Center has, comparing the relationship to beer companies by stating, “the Boys and Girls Club is like Budweiser, the YMCA is Miller, and Valley Youth Center is Bent Paddle”. Described the youth Valley Youth Center primarily serves:

- West Duluth in the Laura MacArthur Elementary School
- Ages 5-18
- Mix of gender and ethnicities



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



- Primarily low income – 95% of which qualify for free/reduced lunch program
- Underserved teen population

Salgy: Reported that there is not a specific teen spot, rather a space that serves youth from ages 5-18. Described how they utilize love as the fabric of relationship building with positive adults to change attitude, explaining that activities, whether it be swimming, climbing, kayaking, are just the tools, whereas the glue is really a positive relationship with adults. Indicated their staff has the ability to ask a child to do their homework and they will do it, however if asked by an adult they do not have a relationship with, youth often decline on having homework to complete. Described the magic of relationships and how Valley Youth Center uses play and fun to change behavior. Stressed that many of the youth they serve wake up in an environment that is not conducive to learning, explaining that if they wake up and think “life sucks”, their behaviors will replicate this negativity. Elaborated on the main goals of their work:

- Want youth to think from the happy center of their brain
  - Happy kids will not be disruptive in class
- Provide opportunity for play

Salgy: Shared his personal experience growing up poor in West Duluth and the many opportunities and places to go. Disclosed the following statistics:

- Graduation rates for youth at Valley Youth Center and other local agencies is 30%
- Graduation rates as a whole are down in the 70% range
- 40% more crime in West Duluth versus east
- 60,000 calls to police department from West Duluth versus 20,000 from east

Salgy: Suggested that West Duluth help with increased calls to the police by realizing a loud stereo doesn't always warrant a police call. Expressed thoughts on the City of Duluth's parks logo only showcasing eastern Duluth and lacking representation of western neighborhoods. Acknowledged the dynamic that needs to change when speaking of opportunity in East and West Duluth. Noting the life expectancy for many in West Duluth is 12 years less than those in others. Described the living environment many youth experience, and how their worries about the next test they're going to take changes to worries about where they will sleep, what they will eat, and whether they will have clean clothes. Explained that investments in outdoor recreation and a nature based playground has allowed the following accomplishments"

- 46 hours of climbing last sum
- 24 hours of kayaking
- 10 hours of sailing
- 20 hours trail exploration
- 4 hours boating
- 5 hours of fishing
- 4 hours outdoor survival
- 4 hours Summer Olympics
- 72 hours of swimming
- 30 hours of geocache

Salgy: Applauded the City for their investment which has great value for those in West Duluth, and



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



provides access to agencies like Valley Youth Center. Indicated their goal for the coming year is to work towards skill based learning. Reminded that it's one thing to get kids exposed to climbing but another to get them to really understand the skill, fueling a passion for the rest of their life.

Emphasized what the group can do:

- Put kid's first
- Think about kids when making policies, procedures and guidelines
- Continue investing in kids

Salgy: Explained the City is at a thirty-year disinvestment in youth, which needs to be pushed back in the other direction. Encouraged everyone to make play part of their life for overall happiness. Indicated Valley Youth Center will continue its investment in west Duluth, noting the \$240,000 they have for this investment.

Isernhagen: Questioned how many youth Valley Youth Center serves.

Salgy: Confirmed that in a year they see about 427 different kids

- 60-80 per day during the school year
- 30-40 a day in the summer

Isernhagen: Questioned how large their staff force is.

Salgy: Stated there are eight core paid staff members, and two to three AmeriCorps volunteers. Noted that UMD sometimes provides volunteers, which equates to four additional full time members.

Vogtman: Requested additional information on the \$240,000 mentioned.

Salgy: Explained that they put this seed money away for a facility in West Duluth. Indicated they are currently at the elementary school, however looking for real estate for a teen specific facility.

Vogtman: Questioned if there were any matching grants they could take advantage of.

Salgy: Disclosed they haven't gotten farther than basically storing the money and indicated his expertise is in youth programming not grant writing.

Art Johnson: Thanked Mr. Salgy for all his work and indicated he wasn't aware of the expansive list of activities they provide.

Schmidt: Thanked Mr. Salgy.

- D. Western Waterfront Trail Mini-Master Plan Update– Jim Filby Williams, City of Duluth Public Administration Director; St. Louis River Restoration Initiative – John Lindgren, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Area of Concern Coordinator; Ecological Opportunities and Outcomes at Mud Lake, Daryl Peterson, Minnesota Land Trust Director of Restoration Programs (informational)



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



Williams: Indicated a basic update of the Western Waterfront Trail Master Plan would be provided before hearing from John Lindgren with the DNR regarding the St. Louis River Initiative within the ecological context of which the Western Waterfront plan falls. Stated that Daryl Peterson will then talk about restoration at Mud Lake and the ecological background. Pointed out the visual on the main projector and turned the presentation over to Project Coordinator, Lisa Luokkala.

Luokkala: Described the questions received from the general public and Parks Commissioners regarding the planning process and indicated she will in response provide some oversight and general updates. Referenced the presentation slide and explained the check marks indicate where they have been, with the next steps being a further analysis of Mud Lake and the potential restoration of that area. Indicated they will work with natural resource managers and interagency partners for further analysis. Informed they will work concurrently with LSMR for further input on the recommendation that was proposed. Communicated their hope for a Master Plan draft in September, which will be available for two weeks of public review, shared with the Trails Committee, and eventually presented to the Parks Commission in October and City Council in late October or early November.

Williams: Supplied context for John Lindgren's presentation by explaining how enjoyment in Duluth relies on a recreation system that requires ecologically healthy public green space and water access. Indicated that successful fulfillment of the Parks and Recreation mission depends on effective restoration, protection and management of green spaces and natural resources, which is apparent in the St. Louis River. Described the Western Waterfront Trail planning process within this context, noting the City's recommendation, as approved by Mayor Larson, envisions among other things, terminating the LSMR track on the north shore of Mud Lake and constructing a trail along the natural shoreline, while facilitating a robust restoration of Mud Lake in its entirety.

John Lindgren: Thanked President Schmidt and Commissioners. Referenced Mr. Salgy's presentation and the importance of play, describing the work he does on the west end as opening the door for kids to get outside and enjoy the outdoors. Established his experience working at the west end for 26 years, serving recently as the St. Louis River Area Conservation Coordinator. Described the current situation, and the positive that comes from debates regarding how to get closer to the water, which wasn't happening in the past. Explained he will keep his comments directed towards the St. Louis River Restoration Initiative, as a part of a larger program to clean up great lakes areas of concern. Highlighted the programs focus on remediation, restoration and revitalization, noting his involvement with each:

- Remediation
  - Doesn't work a whole lot with these sites
  - Helps MN Pollution Control Agency by informing their actions
- Restoration
  - His main focus
- Revitalization
  - EPA driven
  - St. Louis River Estuary now area of concern

Lindgren: Described the opportunity that exists now with the legacy amendment, which opened

financial support in Minnesota, and provides leverage for Duluth to access federal sources for projects that were identified in the past. Explained the partnership they have with Minnesota Land Trust to secure \$22 million for restoration of the estuary. Listed the five projects he will speak to:

- Chambers Grove
  - Partner with the City
  - Important to remember what is most productive for the river
    - Migratory birds, fish populations
  - High water damage existed at this site
  - Secured funding from state and federal sources
  - Took out sheet piling to soften the shoreline with tree stumps
  - Provided fishing access at the shore
    - Fish spawning structure now in place
  - City revitalized with a playground and parking
  - Most productive spawning grounds of Lake Superior
- Fond du Lac
  - Partnering with local tribes and bands
  - Wild rice restoration here and at many other sheltered bays of the upper estuary
  - Funded by support of the Outdoor Heritage Fund and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
  - Long-term project, currently restoring 220 acres a year
    - Equates to 12,000 pounds of rice seed a year
- Gary New Duluth
  - Completed two years ago
  - Radio Tower Bay
    - Similar to Grassy Point
  - Impacted by Legacy wood waste
    - 150,000 pounds of cubic wood waste
    - Old mills were on the water, leaving their waste
  - Goal was to clean up wood waste and revitalize into a place that was good for
    - Muskies, small mouth bass, other fish species
    - Birds and other wildlife
  - Material was dredged out and brought to the US Steel Site for mulch
    - Use de-watering equipment to accomplish clean mulch
- Knowlten Creek
  - Restoration to revitalization project, over a 7-year period
  - Worked with Spirit Mountain to put a system on the hill to capture water
    - From snow melt
    - Prevent sediment being deposited into the estuary
  - Cut off water runoff from the upper peaks
  - Captured the water and piped down for snow making capability
  - Restored a mile of cold water stream habitat
- Kingsbury and Grassy Point
  - Currently in planning stage
  - Grassy has 400,000 cubic yards of wood waste from historic milling industry
  - Not ideal for anglers and fish habitation

- Will remove wood waste at Grassy and sediment deposition coming down from Kingsbury
  - Combining the projects to get use from the excavated wood which will provide the organic layer to put on top after wood material is moved
  - Hope to reboot the natural environment

Daryl Peterson: Introduced himself and described his involvement with Minnesota Land Trust in restoring the habitat of the river. Explained his work with the City is to help them understand opportunities with their green spaces and this area, noting the first area he worked on in Duluth as Magney Snively. Indicated his focus for the presentation will be on wetlands at the estuary, specifically at Mud Lake. Shared his involvement with the City as a partner in protecting our natural resources. Referenced PowerPoint slides and induced wetlands are good, noting:

- Most Minnesotans are aware of this and value the habitat
- Hydrologically good
  - Absorb flood water
  - Process nutrients
  - Deal with pollutants
- Good habitat for fish and water fowl

Peterson: Informed there are different kinds of wetlands, noting how different a cattail marsh is from a coastal wetland. Described a cattail marsh being like a wetland you'd see in your backyard, whereas a coastal wetland is more aquatic and occurs along coastlines, providing a better fish environment. Noted their importance for the great lakes system and indicated Lake Superior is cold and rocky, which is not ideal for small fish species. Indicated that coastal wetlands are smaller and protected, which is helpful for spawning, migration and resting. Informed group that 90% of the 200 fish species are dependent on coastal wetlands, noting the location and importance of the St. Louis River estuary as being the primary driver of biology for Lake Superior. Drew attention to a picture of Minnesota Point prior to development of Rice's Point, noting how large the coastal wetland area was, while providing a direct connection to the river and estuary and eventually to the lake. Indicated they have lost a great deal of this area because of the harbor, and although important, equates to about 3,000 acres of lost coastal wetland. Explained that Mud Lake was a coastal wetland and one of the primary drivers, drawing attention to a map that determined this area was once a wetland. Described that wetlands focus on fish and are necessary for food production, spawning, nursery habitat and pollutant filtering. Summarized the St. Louis River Restoration Initiative's goal to restore these areas and recover about 1,700 acres of lost wetland, while getting the best function back of the area lost. Described the legacy considerations that must be examined with regard to Mud Lake:

- There was an old sawmill here
- Believe there are deposits and wood waste here
- Railroad causeway and its impact on the wetland function
- Debris from the US Steel site
  - Evidence that the debris have encroached on the wetlands, changing the dynamic downstream
  - River flow affected
- Exotic invasive wetlands and environmental contaminants need to be dealt with



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



Peterson: Explained the process focuses not on what was there before, but the function of the site now and any problems. Described the focus of restoration planning for sites like Mud Lake, regardless of the configuration chosen:

- Fish production
- Plant community
  - deep to shallow estuary marsh
- Maintained by natural processes
  - don't want to keep fixing
  - design based on the areas natural function
- Address legacy impairments as much as feasible
  - recognizing financial constraints as they arise
- Ensure moderate energy environment
  - wetlands need some flow and water exchange/movement
- Return to “naturalized” form
  - planning for 50 years in the future
- Improve public access and use

Peterson: Emphasized the collaborative design process with 15 agencies responsible for the cleanup and restoration of the river, which provides different interests and expertise for each site. Shared picture of Chambers Grove before and after restoration, noting the focus on designing habitat features that are good for the environment.

Williams: Thanked Mr. Peterson and Mr. Lundgren for their time and expertise, indicating these presentations are the first of a few steps the City is taking to respond to the desire for additional science based evidence and analysis, deliberation, and education about restoration options at this particular site. Explained the City’s next step is to facilitate and make possible the work of federal, state, tribal natural resource management partners to come together and collaboratively design what Mud Lake restoration looks like on the basis of the best available science and data. Indicated that once this work is complete, they look forward to sharing it with the Parks Commissioners and community.

Schmidt: Invited questions and comments from the Commission and public. Summarized the questions that continues to arise about the potential to deal with water flow in alternative ways, such as bridges and overpasses. Questioned whether all resources have been used to determine how to increase water flow specific to Mud Lake in order to make it a healthy estuary while still maintaining the rail.

Peterson: Explained that sustainability is of importance, including how the area will maintain itself over time. Indicated they hope to get experts together again and learn more about the hydraulics of coastal wetlands, as the water flow in and out of the lake is what maintains these sites and keeps them from filling or growing in. Explained they will have to look into hydraulics and different configurations and their effects, whether it be culverts or other considerations, while paying attention to how large the culverts may need to be to have them provide enough impact. Emphasized his desire to get together with natural resource managers and engineers to explore these alternatives to





## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



determine if alternatives really exist.

Lindgren: Elaborated by stating that Mud Lake is two projects, one being the west side which is in process and governed and facilitated by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the second being the estuary side, which is headed by the Minnesota DNR. Clarified that when the DNR was approached, there had not been an alternative of removing the causeway or data collected, however now the Pollution Control Agency has the ability to move things forward and hire and fund a contractor to conduct hydrodynamic modeling, which will allow them to propose different alternatives and determine what the water exchange is. Indicated the DNR will support the most robust restoration of Mud Lake.

Williams: Indicated that over the last ten to twelve months, the City has had numerous conversations on the phone with natural resource managers, meetings with Fond du Lac band members, local leadership of DNR aquatics, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, eventually convening together to discuss their science based view of what is best. Explained that, subject to confirmation by the cumulative study and analysis process described earlier, the message that was heard from these individuals was that generally speaking, restoration of Mud Lake with causeway removal is likely to be profoundly beneficial ecologically. Emphasized their shared desire for more analysis, data and deliberation, however, they do not expect these partners to come to a different conclusion.

Art Johnston: Indicated that as a resident of western Duluth, he realizes the big elephant in the room is Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad. Expressed agreement in getting youth outside and preserving wetlands, however speaking on behalf of citizens in West Duluth, keeping Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad as part of the equation is important. Emphasized his concern regarding the causeway initially being part of the City's plan and later its removal being proposed. Suggested that other aspects be looked including the history of the rail.

Schmidt: Responded to Mr. Johnston's comment by stating a further study by the City will involve looking at potential alternatives. Indicated with regard to the study, the City will not necessarily change its stance, but remain open to the science being further explored.

Williams: Confirmed the City will be 100% deferent to the science based judgements of the natural resource managers. Referred to an earlier question, stating he would not necessarily agree with the characterization of a sudden shift in direction. Explained that from the outset of this year-long process, one and then two of the options explicatively shared, would have entirely removed the rail line and its ability to operate into the future. Referred to the true difference about the current recommendation, being its refusal to settle on an all-or-nothing option, with recommendation to keep 75% of the rail. Shared that in terms of what West Duluthians want to see, Mayor Larson was so concerned, she took the step to fund and independently administered a random sample survey of district five residents' opinions. Explained that the findings were twofold:

- One being they place a high value on the continued existence and operation of LSMR
- Second being they utilize, value and prefer trail access to the river over rail access to the river

Williams: Reminded that these questions were presented not to inform an all-or-nothing decision, rather to get a sense of the relative priority to those who live in West Duluth, using the example of a



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



single mom in Morgan Park with kids, and the City's responsibility in hearing all these voices.

Lindgren: Offered his belief that additional studies will be done, noting his time in grad school when a professor said, “You think you're going to go out and manage fish, but really you will be managing people”. Indicated that professionals will state what is true and of the best benefit to the estuary is reconnection to its native wetlands. Emphasized that this is not a 100% biological question but also a social. Confirmed this is not a decision of the Minnesota DNR, rather they are serving as an entity that provides biological input to inform the decisions of the City.

Schmidt: Requested any feedback or questions from the public.

Richard Haney (public): Explained his background at UMD in creating and supporting the Outdoor Recreation Program, noting his contact with Environmentalists and the opportunities he's had with those from these organizations who would question the statement from Mr. Williams that everyone would be supportive of the causeway being removed. Recited the vision of the St. Louis River Corridor Initiative:

- Support the natural environment
- Enrich quality of life
- Attract homebuyers
- Establish new visitor destinations
- Stimulate appropriate development

Richard Haney (public): Recited quote from Mayor Larson, “Duluth's history and its future are profoundly tied to the health, sustainability and stewardship of the St. Louis River and Lake Superior. We are excited to work with the community to unveil the potential of the River Corridor and its historic and culturally rich gifts. The River draws us together on this journey which will prove to enrich and enthrall everyone who ventures near it as projects reach completion”. Explained that the rail is historically significant to Duluth and first came in the 1800s, which follows the legacy of the river. Further explained that preservation of this significant feature is important to Duluth's legacy and scenic beauty. Emphasized LSMR's contribution to the economy of West Duluth where industries are of the past. Indicated that tourism in the area is a major economic player, listing Spirit Mountain and the Zoo. Recited statistics from Ken Bueller that indicated 70% of users are tourists. Mentioned accommodation to those who want to experience the area but are physically challenged, or favor a more sedentary form of recreation. Disagreed with river access only being about casting a line or putting a kayak in the water, emphasizing it's also about visual access.

Schmidt: Thanked Mr. Haney for his comments and apologized for having to stop him short, however being mindful of time is important.

Bruce Fehringer (public): Informed group he has lived in the area for 25 years and loves the waterfront, noting that it's the gem that keeps him outdoors. Stated that LSMR is a scenic gem with a lot of history. Pointed out the guided tours, which explain this history. Emphasized how the causeway offers views of the river that otherwise could only be experienced in a boat or canoe. Reminded that many folks are not physically active and cannot get in and out of a kayak, but can use the train. Provided opinion that preserving tracks that came over 150 years ago is important, referencing Mr.



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



Williams comments on the survey and that most people are going to say trail if its proposed as rail or trail versus both. Referenced the Western Waterfront Trail draft and its goal in restoring the natural habitat, questioning if culverts or bridges could be utilized to do so. Expressed hope that the City will listen to the studies and find alternatives. Suggested that removing the tracks and creating a new turn around at Boyscout Landing would disrupt the area even more. Questioned where funding for the turnaround was coming from, and emphasized the history that would be lost in removing the train. Challenged everyone to ride the train.

Mike Casey (public): Introduced himself as chair of the Friends of Western Duluth Parks and Trails. Indicated there was a study from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency titled, *Preliminary Restoration Elements of Mud Lake*, which states at least four to five times, “that there is currently no data to support the assumption that the water exchange between the two bays is limited”. Suggested spending money on a hydraulic study to determine if any modification is needed. Suggested that along with the presentations from Mr. Lindgren and Mr. Peterson, additional studies need to be conducted. Informed group that the stakeholders were extremely surprised that after 15 hours of meetings, the City suggested removal of the causeway. Commented that removal of the causeway limits the sustainability of the rail and will put it in jeopardy. Indicated the City does not have a vision for rail and trail, despite the train organization being the ones who actually put the land into the City’s hands in the first place. Suggested that those in the area favor less development, and that all of the City’s previous plans point to an extension of the Western Waterfront Trail, and not removal of the causeway. Emphasized how difficult it is to remain positive after dedicating time to the planning process, only to have the City endorse a different plan.

Andrew Web (public): Thanked everyone for coming and indicated he is the President of LSMR. Expressed appreciation for the presentations from Mr. Lindgren and Mr. Peterson. Stressed the access LSMR provides to the river for those who cannot get there. Indicated that if the causeway is removed at Mud Lake, the jewel of their operation will be lost and it will take some time to solve that problem. Endorsed the need for a hydrology study before the causeway is removed.

Schmidt: Indicated that he read LSMR’s business plan. Encouraged the Commissioners to ride the train, and challenged LSMR to do as much as they could to get youth on the train.

Mike Casey Sr. (public): Expressed how perfect the rail is and how a price tag cannot be put on it. Noted the rails proximity to the campground, Kingsbury Bay, Kingsbury Creek, the Zoo, and Spirit Mountain. Referenced the flood and how the removal of the polar bear greatly affected Zoo attendance, questioning whether the same would happen to LSMR if the causeway was removed. Indicated the train is the center of the tourism in the area and removal of the causeway will greatly affect it.

Vogtman: Requested Mr. Peterson and Mr. Lindgren speak to the the ecological condition of Mud Lake as it stands.

Lindgren: Explained that west Mud Lake is impacted by dioxin fuel issues which the Pollution Control Agency will look into, noting it is currently under study and on their red site list for remediation.



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



Indicated the milling waste and non-native wood at the southwest side of Mud Lake is affecting the shoreline. Noted that Mud lake functions as is, with water going in and out, however knowing whether it functions as it should can be hard to know for sure. Indicated the site is not completely dysfunctional, however dysfunctional enough that the Pollution Control Agency and MN DNR are going to do work to help the outcome of this process.

Peterson: Stated the wetlands are not as diverse, noting the expanding cattail populations. Confirmed he was not aware of a fish study in regards to east Mud Lake, however they do know sheltered areas like this are important for nursery production and small fish.

Vogtman: Questioned if boaters and canoers can access the causeway.

Bruce Fehring (public): Indicated from his experience, canoers, kayakers and small boats can access.

Lindgren: Confirmed it would have to be a very small boat to access the area.

Andy Webb (public): Thanked Mr. Lindgren and Mr. Peterson again and questioned if they were familiar with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s study on Mud Lake, which spoke about bridges and contamination.

Peterson: Confirmed yes.

Schmidt: Thanked Mr. Williams for providing additional science in response to their request.

Schraepfer: Shared his recent attendance at the Regional Economic Indicators Forum, noting one of the speakers who works for a national agency that markets municipalities and states with the Explore MN program. Summarized the presentation’s data and focus on how tourism is linked to economic growth, and how it becomes the strongest link to a city’s vibrancy. Shared that in regards to Duluth, they spoke about natural tourism, noting how East Duluth got lucky with some of the organic features like the boardwalk and lift bridge. Questioned what would happen if West Duluth got revitalized and lost all the historical pieces, noting the importance of maintaining things like the Zoo and train. Explained that cleanup of the area is important, however the historical sites are part of the soul of the area. Indicated he would have a difficult time supporting removal of the causeway without proof of a direct scientific impact as a result of the hydrology study.

Schmidt: Emphasized how big of decision this plan is and expressed how much he values conversation, discussion, and questions, which encourages others to speak up and work together.

Vogtman: Indicated he did not see the tribe’s representation and input in the plan and process.

Williams: Explained they have consulted the band extensively for ideas and feedback, as they are a member of the stakeholder advisory committee. Indicated that in terms of this specific location, they have not articulated an organizational preference.



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



Mike Casey (public): Spoke to the survey administered, and indicated there was a crescendo of questions which led people into a rail or trail option. Quoted survey question, “If for any reason the City cannot do rail and trail, which do you prefer”. Indicated the City discredits the third of respondents that indicated rail as the best option. Noted the significance of the rail, its history, and ability to be a self-sustaining tourism attraction.

Johnston: Explained that he has been getting more involved and considers himself stakeholder. Provided his opinion that it seems like the City doesn’t like what stakeholders say, so they rely on the survey over the stakeholder’s opinion.

Williams: Clarified that Mayor Larson and the City of Duluth strongly agree that LSMR is a gem and historical resource with a unique and powerful cultural experience. Indicated they see the value, however do not see it as the only important resource, noting restoration of the river, free access, and wheelchair accessibility. Explained they worked exceedingly hard to try to figure out how to keep both rail and trail, however did not find another option that provided with a reasonable degree of confidence that the Western Waterfront Trail could be affordably constructed in a reasonable amount of time, while being responsive to the communities concerns over the health of the river. Indicated there are big hits as a result of the compromises in this plan, noting this option forever sacrifices ecological health at Stewart Creek and Wire Mill Pond and drives up trail maintenance costs. Referenced Mr. Schraepfer’s economic comments and noted two studies commissioned by Visit Duluth which asked overnight visitors what they came to Duluth for, noting the overwhelming response was admission free outdoor activities.

Schraepfer: Agreed with Mr. Williams, but indicated those experiences are focused on certain parts of town and to maintain as many experiences in the part of town we are trying to rebuild is important.

Richard Haney (public): Questioned if there has been a study about the environmental impact if the causeway was removed and a turnaround was created.

Williams: Explained they have asked the natural resource managers about the ecological health, and will continue to ask LSMR how to support the train’s success.

Richard Haney (public): Questioned if the railroad would have the funding to provide anything other than recommendations as it relates to dimensions.

Mike Casey (public): Explained that eliminating the tracks would remove all future possibilities, noting the risk involved with starting the Lakewalk. Indicated Friends of Western Duluth and LSMR were ecstatic about the Western Waterfront Trail under the assumption the rail would remain.

Andy Webb (public): Shared with Mr. Williams he is trying to get together with Project Coordinator, Lisa Luukkala, next week.

Williams: Explained the number one concern is to make sure any approved rail and trail plan is actually affordable to build. Indicated unlike the Lakewalk, the Western Waterfront Trail does not



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



have dollars that can be made available from the general fund, and federal funds are not available because unlike the Lakewalk this trail will not be paved.

Schraepfer: Requested more details on the financial numbers.

Williams: Explained they work with LHB as a professional resource, as well as the advisory committee, to select a specific alignment, and in turn they provide quotes specific to the selected area. Indicated the problem is not the cumulative cost of the trail, rather the size of the chunks. Explained that one of the reasons they are bringing forward this plan is that in association with restoration of Mud Lake, they would ask and require that the entirety of that \$2.3 million segment be constructed immediately in whole, simultaneous with US Steel and EPA constructing in full, 1.6 mile along the US Steel riverfront.

Schraepfer: Questioned if by going this route, they are essentially getting free money versus a different route where the funding would be unknown and piecemealed together.

Williams: Indicated that affordability and the willingness of state and federal funding for trail construction varies significantly depending on the access it provides and its ability to be a cultural and natural resource. Explained that the proposed plan puts value on the health of the natural system there, and receives substantially more support for trail construction versus an alternative that kept the rail causeway at Mud Lake.

Vogtman: Indicated he respects the opinions of everyone, commending the volunteers who work with the rail. Explained that one thing he has not heard a lot about is residents, whereas tourists have been talked about a lot. Spoke to the 95% of kids in poverty Mr. Salgy informed of, or his neighbors in Morgan Park who don't have a place for kids to recreate. Noted the importance of providing affordable recreational opportunities and encouraged everyone to think about kids and having a safe place to recreate versus polluted the US Steel pond kids currently playing in.

Richard Haney (public): Mentioned the polluted pond and his understanding that remediation of this site would happen regardless, questioning if funding from this remediation will be used for the trail construction

Williams: Indicated they are working with agency partners who do not hold a position or a preference about which decision the City makes about the presence or absence of the causeway, however they have indicated that in the event that the City Council chooses an option that removes the causeway, they would then work with the City to help realize and fully finance the City's vision for rail and trail from Riverside to the south shore of Mud Lake.

Richard Haney (public): Indicated that if agency's do not hold a preference regarding the causeway being removed, but they will help with the trail if removed, a preference does seem to exist.

Williams: Confirmed that from the City's vantage, removal of the causeway aligns with their vision to protect and advance the health of the natural world.



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



Richard Haney (public): Spoke to the hydrological study that Mr. Lindgren and Mr. Peterson referenced and questioned if adequate flow was proven whether it would change the project regarding the rail and trail.

Williams: Indicated that in this event they would defer to the better informed judgements of federal, state, tribal and natural resource experts.

Richard Haney (public): Questioned if this information would be made public.

Schmidt: Confirmed that they would expect to receive this information before making a decision, noting that tonight’s meeting is a result of requesting more information at a previous meeting. Expressed his confidence in receiving information from staff and requested an additional update on the Western Waterfront Trail at the next Commission meeting.

### V. Commission Committees

A. Parks and Facilities – meeting date: TBA

Chair - Michael Schraepfer – John Schmidt, Dean Vogtman, Dennis Isernhagen [Dale Sellner]

Schmidt: Requested Commissioner Schraepfer schedule a meeting with this group.

B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: Thursday, July 20 at noon in the Parks office

Chair – John Schmidt – Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby [Cheryl Skafte]

C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Tjaard Breeuwer– Tiersa Wodash, Britt Rohrbaugh, Dudley Edmondson, Dean Vogtman, Art Johnston, Mike Casey, Eric Viken, Shawna Mullen [Andy Holak]

D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult) – meeting date: TBA

Chair - Erik Torch - Amanda Crosby, Dudley Edmondson, Kristin Bergerson [Pamela Page]

### VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

### VII. New Business

### VIII. Old Business

A. Parks Staffing Update

Williams: Informed group they are reaching the end of the hiring process for the Parks Manager. Indicated they will interview the last of the finalists and the team will make a determination if there is a fit. Explained that in the event there is not a good fit, the position will be reposted.

Cheryl Skafte: Introduced herself and explained her recent assignment as the Provisional Assistant Manager in Kathy Bergen’s absence. Updated the Commission on the vacant Recreation Specialist position, indicating the City received 73 applications and they conducted interviews today with some exciting candidates. Explained they hope to provide an update at the next Parks Commission meeting.



# PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



## IX. Division Manager’s Report

### A. Change in emphasis of True North AmeriCorps program

Williams: Explained that True North AmeriCorps submitted their application for renewal of funding this year and the City asked the YMCA to significantly shift the emphasis of the True North program to focus less on academic training and more on non-academic youth development and outdoor recreation as much as possible, specifically low income areas in Duluth. Indicated the YMCA is a fabulous partner and recognized that this new focus aligned more closely with the Parks and Recreation mission. Introduced Ms. Clanaugh to speak in greater detail of funding renewal and the shift in program emphasis.

Tracie Clanaugh (Duluth Area Family YMCA): Indicated they received their \$415,000 Corporation of National and Community Service award, along with \$450,000 from local match funding, which supports 35 True North AmeriCorps members that serve full time in the community. Explained that these members, along with the work the City has done and other local agencies, shows how when a community comes together for its youth it can do really amazing work. Spoke to their task to strengthen their response to what the City wanted from their contribution, noting the change in emphasis came at a time when the following community partners came together to discuss youth access to the outdoors:

- Duluth Area Family YMCA
- City of Duluth
- The Northland Foundation
- University of Minnesota Duluth
- Local Youth Serving Agencies
- Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation
- Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation
- Local Duluth Schools

Clanaugh: Explained that not all youth in the area are able to experience the outdoors, noting the importance of youth learning and growing from these outdoor experiences. Indicated the new focus is in partnership with Youth Outdoors-Duluth, which focuses on bringing community partners together to address the disparities between youth who have these opportunities and those who may not. Explained their proposal also reflects the Duluth Outdoors Charter that was adopted two years ago, noting its emphasis on training outdoor providers who, although experienced in providing outdoor opportunities, may not be as experienced in serving vulnerable youth. Explained they will still support academics during the school year, noting how the two components will complement each other well, bolstering academic skills and self-confidence through outdoor experiences. Listed the following local community agencies that work towards supporting positive youth experiences:

- Valley Youth Center
- Woodland Hills
- YWCA GirlPower
- Damiano Center Kids Cafe
- Community Action Duluth Freedom Center
- Chester Bowl Improvement Club





## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



- Gary New Duluth Recreation Center
- Hartley Nature Center
- Harbor Highlands
- Mentor Duluth
- Youth Outdoors-Duluth
- KeyZone
- Children's Museum
- Day Camp Kitchi Gami
- Eagle's Nest

Denette Lynch (public): Questioned if changing from an academic approach to outdoor recreation will affect graduation rates which are an issue in West Duluth.

Clanough: Indicated the academic support will not be compromised with the addition of outdoor recreation, confirming they are still serving in the schools and at afterschool programs.

Denette Lynch (public): Questioned if the academic portion will be lost during the summer, disrupting progress during the school break.

Clanough: Confirmed both can be achieved in the summer, where many of the programs have morning academics and afternoon outdoor recreation.

Williams: Explained that \$120,000 comes from the parks fund which was approved to be exclusively used to advance the parks and recreation mission, noting how the emphasis on things directly related to the parks mission was uncomfortably slim. Spoke to the folks in Duluth who have fond memories growing up in neighborhood community centers and attending City recreational programs. Explained that today they are faced with a more challenging fiscal condition, noting that the \$120,000 a year would hire less than two City Recreation Specialists. Further explained the level of leverage they get with this investment has a far greater impact.

Torch: Thanked Ms. Clanough for the update and indicated how important it is to realize it's not an either/or situation in regards to recreation or academics. Pointed out that academic learning is based on solid social and emotional development, which will affect a child's academics if not met. Expressed excitement for this partnership and the places and opportunities it provides for youth to interact with caring adults in a structured environment, which will help them in school and become much better well-rounded adults in our community.

Clanough: Shared that while using the local trails is free, the Youth Outdoors-Duluth program provides the gear that's necessary to get out, whether that be bikes, kayaks, helmets or lifejackets.

Mike Casey (public): Commented on the bike fleet the YMCA received a few years ago and questioned if the rumor about ISD 709 having a bike fleet they don't want to use is true.

Bergerson: Confirmed the bike fleet is used at local middle schools, specifically at Ordean East and Lincoln Park.



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



Crosby: Explained that they had a presentation from Princess Kasob at Neighborhood Youth Service and were informed they could donate shoes. Questioned where the shoes should be dropped off.

Edmondson: Confirmed he will take the shoes to Washington Center. Thanked the City and the YMCA for their responsibility for these funds, noting that he volunteers at Washington Center. Indicated the work they do would not be possible without AmeriCorps members.

### X. Public Comment

Ron Heurung (public): Showed group current pictures of Wheeler Field and indicated the fields need attention. Shared that in 1980 the Softball Association started with a dream to bring softball to Duluth, going the nonprofit route to obtain Wheeler and eventually donating it to the City of Duluth. Emphasized the tournaments that take place at Wheeler, which brings people from out of town. Indicated the fields are not in good shape. Informed group that Jack Schade and the Park Directors cannot get funding, however UMD and St. Scholastica keep asking about the dugouts because they want to hold tournaments. Explained there needs to be two dugouts and rails on the stairs so people stop getting hurt. Noted the money they've donated for the dugouts and the urgency of being informed when the work will be complete. Further explained the deteriorating rubber matting and requested that the City follow up on this.

Schmidt: Requested from Mr. Williams where they were at with the Wheeler Mini Master Plan.

Williams: Indicated he will follow up directly, noting the completion of the Wade and Wheeler Mini Master Plan in late 2015 or early 2016, which put aside \$550,000 of half and half to reinvest in the area. Informed group that the full cost to implement the plan was plus or minus \$2 million. Spoke to two things that may be driving the frustrating experiences Mr. Heurung has had:

- Staff can only manage so many park reconstruction projects at a time
- Determining how to use the \$550,000 to leverage additional funds so a greater portion of the total projects can be implemented
  - Federal and state grant programs tend to place a low value on projects of this nature
  - Have not been awarded grants they've applied for

Ron Heurung (public): Indicated there are enough funds to complete the dugouts so tournaments can be held.

Schmidt: Requested the safety issues be put as a maintenance priority, expressing trust in Mr. Williams direction in getting this complete.

Williams: Confirmed he will speak with Jack Schade and the Park Maintenance Supervisor to address the safety issues and look at the cumulative deferred maintenance bill

Ron Heurung (public): Confirmed they've been promised for ten years.

Vogtman: Noted his recent tour of the Gary New Duluth Recreation Center and how phenomenal it



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 12, 2017

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



was, congratulating their grassroots efforts. Encourage everyone to check out Chambers Grove.

Denette Lynch (public): Shared that GND Recreation Center is having an ice cream social tomorrow.

### **XI. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm. Moved by Commissioner Torch. Second by Commissioner Vogtman.

### **XII. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be Wednesday August 9, 2017 at 5pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.