



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of August 9, 2017

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



I. Call Meeting to Order

President Schmidt called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

II. Roll Call

Present: John Schmidt, Amanda Crosby, Dudley Edmondson, Tjaard Breeuwer, Dennis Isernhagen, Britt Rohrbaugh, Dean Vogtman, Michael Schraepfer, Kristin Bergerson, Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison), Art Johnston (ISD 709 Liaison), Alanna Oswald (ISD 709 School Board Liaison Alternate)

Absent: Erik Torch, Tiersa Wodash, Frank Jewell (St. Louis County Board Liaison)

III. Approval of July 12 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Breeuwer motioned for approval of the July 12, 2017 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Vogtman. Unanimously approved.

Schmidt: Reiterated his commitment to reviewing the eight guiding principles of the 2010 Parks and Recreation Master Plan at each meeting and recited the second principle and its four supporting objectives:

- To ensure adequate and stable funding
 - Ensuring stable and adequate funding to meet system goals and restore funding for system upkeep and modest expansion
 - Diversify funding sources to include taxation, dedication requirements, legacy funding grants, donations, gifts and bequeaths
 - Follow a system approach, which makes sure the recreation system is more sustainable by reducing operating costs through a revised system investment, guided by an asset management plan
 - Continue to create efficiencies in the delivery of services and facilities through partnerships, volunteers and sustainable practices

Schmidt: Indicated feedback has been received from the public, Commissioners, and City staff regarding the length and tone of public discussion at past Commission meetings. Clarified his goals as chair of these meetings, and shared a personal story of being a resident during planning of Park Point, noting feelings of powerlessness and anger that resulted from not being heard. Indicated that from this experience, he realized more could be done and therefore applied for the Parks Commission, noting his mission to help keep the public process positive and healthy. Acknowledged the Parks Commission’s mission to make recommendations to City administration, City Council and staff, regarding decisions about parks and recreation. Confirmed that feedback from the public is already imbedded in the planning process, however planning involves so many variables it’s virtually impossible to communicate the variables in any given plan for the following reasons:

- Staff limitations
- Legal issues
- Neighborhood values



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- Funding sources
- Partner and user needs
- Community background knowledge
- Goals of those involved

Schmidt: Emphasized the importance of the Commission serving as advisors and hearing from administration, City staff and the public. Supported a healthy public planning process that includes thorough examination, noting Commissioner’s responsibility to vet through everything before making a decision. Discussed the tone of meetings and noted that, although he understands anger and frustration, it can be distracting and uncomfortable for others. Vowed to keep the tone informational and productive. Confirmed that personal criticisms and attacks are not welcome at meetings. Encouraged questions and open dialogue amongst Commissioners and the public. Requested a 30-minute executive session with only the Parks Commissioners immediately following the September Parks Commission meeting. Continued by reciting poem titled “Duluth” by Bud Brand.

***Special meeting later redacted, see later comments by Jim Filby Williams.

IV. Presentations

- A. Kingsbury Bay & Grassy Point Restoration: A Health Impact Assessment – Katie Williams, Geographer, United States Environmental Protection Agency Office of Research and Development (informational)

Schmidt: Introduced Katie Williams and her presentation title.

Katie Williams: Introduced herself and position as Geographer with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Research and Development located in Duluth. Indicated that as a geographer, the questions that her group tries to answer relate to what thing you are trying to study, how did it get there, and what change does it makes once it gets there. Further explained that her focus of study is the environmental decisions made in areas of concern and Duluth in regards to community revitalization. Described a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) as a systematic process that takes a lot of different data and analytical methods to consider input from stakeholders in order to determine potential effects of a policy decision within a particular population. Summarized what they hope to find from these assessments:

- The impact of a decision on the health of a population
- How the health impacts will be distributed through that population

Katie Williams: Advised that in regard to Kingsbury Bay and Grassy Point, there was a specific geographic area of focus in Western Duluth. Highlighted the reasons they perform an HIA:

- Environmental impacts of a decision are often overlooked
- Decisions are often focused on a specific problem and can be looked at from a very narrow lens

Katie Williams: Indicated that HIA’s serve as a tool to gain a wider view of a decisions impact. Noted that when referring to health, they are looking at more than just the presence or absence of disease,

stating the importance of physical, social and mental wellbeing. Explained that when referring to health there are many physical and structural contributions, drawing attention to the rainbow diagram displayed on the projector, and how it illustrates social determinants of health. Noted that one’s behaviors in regards to health are often dictated by what is made available to them, whether public infrastructure, services, housing, park locations and accessibility, or access to the political process and involvement in decision making. Explained that from an HIA, they are trying to determine how a policy decision or plan leads to particular outcomes, by measuring how these determinants of health will change based on the proposed policy. Explained the systematic process steps they use for HIA’s:

- Screening - to determine whether a proposal is likely to have health effects
- Scoping – to establish the scope of health effects that will be included, the populations affected, the source of data, and the methods to be used
- Assessment – two-step process that describes the baseline health status and then assesses potential impacts
- Recommendations – suggest design alternatives that could be implemented to improve health or action that could be taken to manage health effects
- Reporting – present findings and recommendations to decision-makers and stakeholders
- Monitoring and Evaluation – monitoring the implementation of recommendations and evaluation of the process, impact or outcomes

Katie Williams: Indicated that the decision they are studying involves the Kingsbury Bay and Grassy Point habitat restoration project, noting its two-part process. Explained that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) is conducting a two-part habitat restoration of this area, which is very close to City park assets, therefore providing an opportunity to study how the habitat restoration will impact community health. Confirmed that the Kingsbury Bay project will restore a wetland complex that is right below the Lake Superior Zoo along the Western Waterfront Trail. Noted that this area is now a wetland invaded by cattails and the goal is to restore it to open water again, utilizing the sediment that is dredged from Kingsbury Bay for habitat restoration at Grassy Point. Reported that up to 170,000 cubic yards of sediment will be removed and placed at different sites. Indicated that one of the difficulties with habitat restoration is finding another place to take and re-use sediment, however in this case, Grassy Point has a lot of degraded habitat and open water, serving as a great opportunity. Explained that by removing the sediment in Kingsbury Bay, it will result in more flow, increased open water habitat, and opportunities for different types of habitat. Referred to areas of interest that have a fishing pier and water access, noting there is also a deep hole which has drawn attention as a good ice fishing location. Listed other potentials for Kingsbury Bay Restoration:

- Fishing Pier
- Water Access
- Swimming beach
- Kayaking and boating opportunities

Katie Williams: Explained that Grassy Point has a great deal of legacy wood waste from a historic wood mill, therefore, the idea behind restoration is removing the wood waste in order to:

- Create some upland areas
- Restore some of the water habitat

Katie Williams: Confirmed that the concept plans for these two restoration projects are ideas presented over time, and are not by any means the final proposal. Noted the proposed additions in the Grassy Point Concept Plan:

- Birding platforms
- Fishing piers
- Walking trails

Katie Williams: Explained that following the restoration by the MN DNR, the City of Duluth is expected to take time planning for park restoration. Pointed out that from the HIA, they hope to inform the City’s future plans. Spoke to the six-step planning process, noting the public outreach they conducted to determine the social and environmental determinants of health, as defined by the community. Explained that in order to gather this information, they conducted public meetings requesting feedback from community members regarding how they used the spaces being studied, in hopes of capturing people’s experiences. Mentioned one of the problems in asking people questions out of context is that you tend not to get their true gut reactions. Explained that at the public meetings they utilized maps to help community members visualize locations in question, allowing them to leave comments. Indicated these comments are later assessed, looking not at the exact phrase or comment left, rather what it contributed to people’s health. Explained they are currently in the assessment phase where they study and compare the following before providing a recommendation:

- How different project alternatives will change how people access the sites
- What types of recreational opportunities will be available
- Opportunities for habitat restoration

Katie Williams: Indicated they hope to have a draft of the HIA by late fall. Informed group that when conducting an HIA, they study two sets of links for each pathway, looking at the decision and the health, then how the health will change. Summarized the themes and determinants of health that came up during the public input process:

- Noise and light pollution – during the construction phase
- Crime and personal safety
- Social and cultural dimensions of parks and recreation
- Air quality
- Recreation aesthetics
- Water habitat

Katie Williams: Referred to the concept plans displayed in the back of the Council Chambers and invited Commissioners and the public to stay after the meeting and leave comments, similar to how the public meetings and feedback were conducted. Listed the other individuals involved with this HIA and planning process:

- Rosita Clarke – EPA Region 5 Brownsfield Program
- Florence Fulk – EPA Office of Research and Development
- Joel Hoffman – EPA Office of Research and Development
- Bill Majewski – Morgan Park Community Club & St. Louis River Alliance
- Justicia Rhodus – Pegasus Technical Services



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Schmidt: Requested any questions or comments from the Commissioners or public. Expressed appreciation for the holistic approach of the study.

Katie Williams: Voiced how fun this work is for her, specifically studying how people participate and make collective decisions.

- B. Runway Realignment Project at Sky Harbor Airport – Benita Crow, Project Manager, SEH Inc. (informational)

Benita Crow: Introduced herself and affiliation with SEH Inc., an aviation firm based out of St. Paul, with a local office in Duluth. Introduced the Airport Manager for Sky Harbor, Brian Madsen. Explained that they requested to present to the Parks Commission about the runway realignment project they've been planning for ten years and will begin construction on this fall. Highlighted her main agenda items and indicated she will provide a brief background on the project and what to expect. Summarized the airports background and significance:

- Sky Harbor is located on Park Point
- Unique airport – both paved runway and seaplane base
- Used by businesses, local recreational pilots, customs and border control

Benita Crow: Summarized project background:

- MnDOT Office of Aeronautics inspected the runway in 2007
 - Identified trees penetrating the approach to Runway 32
 - Airport licensure was at risk without action
 - Became a safety concern
- Duluth Airport Authority initiated environmental review and scoping document in 2007
 - Created roughly 20-25 alternatives to mitigate the problem
 - A half dozen alternatives moved forward from the scoping to the environmental assessment
 - Environmental assessment completed in 2015
 - Preferred alternative shortens and rotates the runway end into Superior Bay (southeast end of the runway rotated roughly 5 degrees into the bay)
 - Proposed rotation eliminates any future issues with tree growth
- Park Point is home to the Minnesota Point Pine Scientific and Natural Area (SNA)
 - Many of the trees are within the Minnesota DNR owned SNA
 - City of Duluth owns property that has old growth red and white pines
- Minnesota Land Trust has a Conservation Easement in this area
 - The trees are protected by multiple layers
 - Only example of old growth red and white pines that grow in a sandbar

Benita Crow: Summarized the two final alternatives that were studied:

- No action and continued use of existing airport facilities
 - Trees would continue to grow
 - Airport would lose its licensure and no longer operate
 - Any funding accepted from MnDot or the FAA would have grant assurances that were previously agreed upon, therefore resulting in the airport having to pay back grant funds accepted (roughly \$8 million in paybacks)



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- Selected alternative, titled 5a Short
 - Runway shortened to 2,600 feet long (currently 3,000ft) and is rotated 5 degrees into Superior Bay
 - 7.5 acres of fill will go into Superior Bay to allow for the new runway
 - Avoids cutting and topping off any trees
 - No impact to the trees

Benita Crow: Explained where SEH is at in the planning process, noting environmental and permitting concerns:

- FAA found no significant impact in their Environmental Assessment
- MnDOT has approved the new plan
- Working with the US Army Core of Engineers and DNR to get permits secured
 - Section 404 fill permit
 - Section 401 water quality permit
 - DNR Public Waters Works Permit

Benita Crow: Continued by explaining the proposed construction, highlighting each phase of the schedule:

- Phase 1 – Perimeter berm construction and fill
 - Starts after Labor Day 2017
 - Engineered slope with rip rap
 - Fill up to correct grade
 - Will sit for a period of time and consolidate
 - Minimal impacts to the area
 - Material hauled in by barge so lessen vehicular traffic
- Phase 2 – Surcharge
 - Starts after Labor Day 2018
 - Surcharge (dirt) placed in the construction area
 - Allow for further consolidation to prevent sloughing
 - Periodic runway closures
 - No major impact to area
- Phase 3 – Remove surcharge and construct runway
 - Begins in 2019
 - Runway constructed in parallel taxiway
 - Periodic runway closures
 - New runway anticipated in October 2019

Benita Crow: Indicated they have completed the design for the first phase, with the bid opening in June. Confirmed that Northland Constructors will be doing the work for Phase one. Noted the grant application was submitted to the FAA, and they have received this and a state grant for the work. Informed group that the project is 90% funded by the FAA with the remaining 10% funded by the State of Minnesota. Communicated that both the FAA and MnDOT funds utilized for this project come from aviation sources, such as fuel taxes or airline ticket taxes. Explained that Phase I will be constructed from Labor Day until Christmas, noting that it is an engineered slope designed in an effort to make sure it withstands the new footprint of the runway so no sloughing occurs. Indicated

that it's basically a rip rap material with granular fill below, which will go around the new footprint at the south end of the runway. Noted the existing taxiway will be removed as part of the first phase, therefore some of this material will be used for the new fill area. Indicated this will help minimize construction traffic. Explained another portion of the project will be removing the existing retaining wall for the seaplane base. Described the three sub-phases of phase one, noting the removal of the existing timber retaining and replacing it with vinyl seawall with a concrete cap. Explained that because this project impacts Superior Bay, they had to negotiate what the value of the impact was in terms of a mitigation package. Indicated that when you impact wetlands you can purchase prescriptive wetland credits, however in regards to Superior Bay there isn't any distinct precedent that exists. Explained their negotiations with the Army Core of Engineers and DNR to establish the value of 7.5 acres of fill. Described the mitigation elements determined for the area as part of these negotiations:

- Compost tube rolls and upland buffer plants propagation
 - Organic soil with seed in it that will be imbedded in the rip rap
 - Allows vegetation to group through the rip rap
 - Efforts to soften the shoreline
- Terrestrial enhancement in areas impacted by construction
 - Take the native vegetation and bring to a greenhouse
 - Allow it to continue to grow and then replant after construction
 - Salvages native vegetation
 - Manage and remove invasive species in the area
- Aquatic habitat enhancement near seawall
 - Salvaging aquatic vegetation and replanting after construction

Benita Crow: Indicated that Phase II design will take place this winter, with a bid request going out in June 2018. Explained that grant offers will take place in August of 2018, with Labor Day until Thanksgiving designated for the surcharge time as described earlier for material consolidation. Described a mitigation element of Phase II being wooden crib structures, similar to linkin logs, with root wads imbedded within the structures. Explained the crib structures will be constructed on the ice, which will eventually sink when the ice melts, providing additional fishery habitat. Detailed the schedule for Phase III, noting a bid opening in June followed by a grant offer. Indicated the bulk of the work will be the new paved and lighted runway, parallel connecting taxiways and precision approach path indicators, which is scheduled to be completed by October 2019. Indicated her presentation is part of a public outreach plan, noting the groups they are meeting with on a regular basis during this process, such as the Park Point Community Club and Sky Harbor Airport tenants. Noted the monthly newsletters they put together for local groups and community clubs affected by the construction.

Schmidt: Thanked Brian Madsen for his work with the Park Point Community Club, noting the amount of work he has done to repair the relationship between the Club and Airport. Questioned if any park land would be used or disturbed during the construction process.

Benita Crow: Confirmed no and indicated there are lots of walking paths in the area, therefore if anyone questioned the noise during construction, they want to educate as many people as to what is going on at the Airport. Indicated there will be informational signs at the construction site for both



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locals and visitors.

Schmidt: Questioned if there was any land exchange taking place.

Benita Crow: Indicated that when property is considered part of an airport, its protected by grant assurances, therefore when an airport decides they want to release the property or give it to another entity, there is an FAA process you need to go through to show it no longer serves an aeronautical use.

Schmidt: Requested confirmation of where this portion of property is located.

Benita Crow: Referred to the PowerPoint presentation and project area maps, again noting the area that will eventually become DNR owned and protected.

Schmidt: Questioned if they anticipate any other development.

Benita Crow: Confirmed no, and explained that the Environmental Assessment looked at any opportunities for expansion of this area and how it is extremely restricted to do protected vegetation and wildlife. Indicated there is room for two additional hangers and showed the location on the project map.

Schraepfer: Questioned how the trees were not in the way when the runway was initially created.

Benita Crow: Explained the trees were not an issue until they matured and came into the south, noting it wasn't until the mid-2000s that they became a problem. Indicated the area is a 20:1 slope, therefore the trees have to get pretty high before they penetrate the runway.

Schraepfer: Questioned if there is any planting in the area from SNA.

Benita Crow: Answered that she wasn't aware of any plantings and that the goal of the SNA is allow the area to grow naturally and preserve it, noting the additional layer of protection from the Land Trust.

Schmidt: Questioned if construction would affect marine traffic.

Benita Crow: Indicated construction should not affect marine traffic. Explained they will have barges coming in that could affect sea plane activity, however most activity happens in the summer and their construction will take place in the fall. Indicated the construction area is mostly shallow water, which they will mark with buoys to inform the rowing and boating clubs to stay out of the construction area.

Schmidt: Referenced a previous presentation from the boating club, noting their thoughts that some of their fill would be used for this project.

Crow: Indicated they did explore this option, however they were much further into their project



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planning process, whereas the boat club had yet to begin their environmental process, therefore it came down to timing being the biggest reason this arrangement couldn't work.

C. Parks Recycling Initiative- Cheryl Skafte, Provisional Assistant Manager, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division (informational)

Skafte: Updated the Parks Commission on the Parks recycling initiative, indicating it has been an informal goal of herself and others to develop and implement an integrated recycling program for the Division. Explained that this next year they have three exciting things happening that will bring the Division closer to the goal of having an integrated recycling initiative in the Parks system. Thanked Councilor Westerlund for her help in making this initiative happen. Highlighted the three things happening:

- Snapple-Dr. Pepper Grant
 - Applied for and received 60 new recycling bins
 - Installed and implemented in various parks throughout Duluth
 - Wheeler, Park Point, Brighton Beach, 12th Street Beach, Fairmont Park, Memorial Park, Portland Square and the Lakewalk
 - Will track the amount of recycling they're pulling from these bins over the course of the next three years in compliance with the grant agreement
 - Waste diversion update to the Parks Commission will be provided at a later time
- New Recycling Stations
 - Currently at Lester Park and Enger Park
 - Will eventually install one at Chambers Grove Park
 - Instead of various garbage cans throughout the park, a central system that features garbage and recycling is now in place
 - Located at the entry of the park
 - Similar to styles located at state parks
 - Have received positive feedback and will continue expanding the program to other park locations if the model proves successful
- Green Corps Member
 - Received notification that we will receive a Green Corps Member for the 2017-2018 service year
 - Their focus will be on waste diversion, waste management, and recycling efforts in Duluth parks
 - This is an AmeriCorps position offered through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
 - Listed goals for this position
 - Identify improvements for waste diversion and recycling efforts in 10-15 buildings, facilities and park spaces
 - Working on volunteer recruitment and organizing volunteers to help with waste diversion efforts
 - Conducting outreach and education with local entities

Schmidt: Thanked Mrs. Skafte and invited any comments.

Isernhagen: Questioned if there would be any signage at the receptacles.



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Skaftte: Explained they know there are improvements that can be made and education that needs to happen for users and customers. Indicated that signage and education will likely be incorporated after the assessment completed by the AmeriCorps member this fall.

Vogtman: Requested clarification of what residents can do if they encounter trash like mattresses, furniture or appliances in parks.

Skaftte: Confirmed residents should call the main parks line and staff will process the request and inform Park Maintenance. Indicated they are currently collecting numbers on how much illegally dumped garbage they collect so people can see the significance of the problem. Explained that Park Maintenance works closely with the Solid Waste Compliance Officer Karen O’Donnell and the Streets Division to remove illegally dumped items in City parks.

Schmidt: Referred to a previous meeting at which Billy Lynch questioned if a partnership with WLSSD could be formed in response to illegal dumping.

Skaftte: Confirmed they work very closely with WLSSD, noting the program they have that allows Duluth to work in partnership with them to bring large items like mattresses and household waste to their transfer station in exchange for Duluth Parks doing a better job tracking where items are coming from. Referenced a stream cleanup day earlier this year and that they pulled over 3,500 pounds of garbage from three creeks.

Oswald (ISD 709 School Board Liaison Alternate): Questioned if they will track the amount of trash not deposited into the new containers.

Skaftte: Requested clarification if Ms. Oswald was referencing audits of the garbage can content.

Oswald (ISD 709 School Board Liaison Alternate): Clarified that if one location for garbage is implemented, will they track the amount of garbage that doesn't end up there because it's too far away and park users do not utilize the central garbage location.

Skaftte: Responded that she hopes the AmeriCorps member will do waste audits of the garbage cans to determine how Parks is doing in regards to diverting recycling from the landfills. Explained that in regards to waste not making it into centralized receptacles, it will be more anecdotal versus measuring it in a quantifiable way, with Park Maintenance determining whether they see an increase in littering at these specific locations.

Breeuwer: Thanked Ms. Skaftte for her leadership and commitment on this issue, noting that it is very much an ideological issue. Questioned if we have a free collection area of large items of trash.

Skaftte: Confirmed there is no free collection of garbage, noting that in the City of Duluth there is no municipal garbage service, rather private contracts as homeowners and property owners. Indicated that this presents opportunities and challenges.

Breeuwer: Requested that City Councilor Em Westerlund revisit this issue with the City.



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Westerlund (City Council Liaison): Indicated that in recent history and past conversations, the idea of garbage collection zones has been discussed, which would divide Duluth into specific areas that would have individual contracts worked out. Confirmed that City Council and City Staff have discussed working with private contractors on this matter in the past. Shared another idea brought forth by Councilor Hobbs, which would be an amnesty garbage collection day that could coincide with move out day on the college campuses. Noted the challenge of this is who pays the bill for the private garbage collectors to come and remove this waste. Mentioned Mrs. Skafte, City Staff members and Karen O’Donnell who have been working diligently to collect data and monitor solid waste dump off and problems in the City. Noted that this growing body of data is very compelling as we work upstream towards a policy solution.

Skafte: Pointed out audience member Bill Majewski, who has coordinated a Riverfront Communities Cleanup, which has worked successfully to provide opportunities for his neighborhood to bring large waste items, at a reduced cost, to a centralized location. Indicated they have asked Mr. Majewski to share his model to see if it could be replicated in other Duluth neighborhoods.

Mike Casey (public): Indicated that years ago, WLLSD gave out coupons for tires and appliances. Shared his experience moving a mattress to UMD and the cost of \$10 to dispose of the mattress and box spring. Explained that the distance and cost to get rid of these items may be contributing to the problem. Questioned how we are being efficient with emptying garbage cans located in the park system.

Skafte: Thanked Mr. Casey and indicated that many of the parks have painted oil barrels as garbage receptacles, which presents challenges in lifting the garbage out versus a preferred garbage receptacle that you could open up and pull the garbage out. Indicated there are efficiencies that could be made in parks garbage collection system, which would come with investment in that infrastructure.

Mike Casey (public): Questioned if partnerships with businesses could exist.

Schraepfer: Explained that last year he inquired and found out garbage is not a required utility in the City of Duluth, making it an easy bill not to pay. Shared one of the comments discussed last year being at a minimum, having housing that factors garbage in as a required bill when providing assistance. Questioned if there is any movement on this topic.

Skafte: Thanked Mr. Schraepfer for his comments and indicated she is not aware of any action taken in this regard, however she requested time to research the topic further and respond accordingly.

Vogtman: Questioned if anyone has reached out to the City of Superior to see how their parks have been affected, as their garbage is county run.

Skafte: Indicated she will add this to the Green Corps members job model and thanked Mr. Vogtman for his suggestion.

Bill Lynch (public): Indicated there are two companies for garbage now, noting that when you renew



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your license on your car, you have to certify that you have insurance. Explained that there is a line item on property taxes that indicates whether you have garbage service, however there is nothing to prove whether you have it.

Westerlund (City Council Liaison): Explained that collection fees are assessed on the property before it can be sold or if its tax forfeited it becomes an additional fee.

Schraepfer: Indicated that these fees only exist if they had garbage service, noting the mechanism that is already in place for Comfort Systems and Minnesota Power, where if service ends they notify building safety. Indicated that Sarah Benning with the City then manages condemnation at six months when utilities are gone.

Schmidt: Thanked Mrs. Skafte for leading the charge on this issue.

Skafte: Shared that when she started her job in Parks five years ago she thought it was going to be about flowers and trees, now realizing it’s a lot about garbage and bathrooms.

V. Commission Committees

- A. Parks and Facilities – meeting date: TBA
Chair - Michael Schraepfer – John Schmidt, Dean Vogtman, Dennis Isernhagen [Dale Sellner]
- B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: Thursday, August 17 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

Johnston (ISD 709 School Board Liaison): Reported that playground mulch replacement is underway at the schools. Indicated this was passed after much discussion, despite the boards disappointment in the cost of removing the mulch.

Schmidt: Questioned if the City had any playgrounds with rubber mulch.

Cheryl: Confirmed that Harrison Park and Bayfront currently have rubber mulch, noting that Woodland was replaced with wood fiber last year. Confirmed the rubber mulch at Harrison Park is being replaced this year.

Schmidt: Questioned if the rubber mulch at the two locations would be replaced.

Crosby: Shared from her previous research that the rubber mulch at the Bayfront playground would stay because users are not there over long periods of time, rather visitors or local users with afterschool programs or at special events.



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Johnston (ISD 709 School Board Liaison): Requested time with Ms. Skafte at a later time to compare the cost of contractors removing the mulch.

Cheryl: Confirmed yes to meeting.

Oswald (ISD 709 School Board Liaison Alternate): Explained there is a contractual obligation with all of the school’s playgrounds to be replaced by October 1st, noting that not all playgrounds will be replaced before the start of the school year. Indicated that the Stowe playground replacement is a completely separate project with separate funding.

VII. New Business

A. Lincoln Park Grant – Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration, City of Duluth

Williams: Updated the Commission on the future of Lincoln Park, indicating restoration at this location is one of the City’s most exciting St. Louis River Corridor parks because of its history and that it serves one of the largest neighborhoods in Duluth, where no less than 50% of the kids are living in poverty. Explained their focus on restoring this park and the mix of exciting and challenging news he has to present. Shared that more than a million dollars has been raised, with nearly 1.6 million to invest in restoration. Indicated the challenging news is that the \$750,000 grant from the National Parks Service comes with intensive environmental and cultural resource assessment requirements, which puts into question the original plan to complete a Phase I playground replacement this fall. Explained they are currently reassessing this timeline and will report back to the Commission at a later date. Indicated FEMA restoration at Miller Creek will begin August 14th, and is scheduled to complete September 15th. Noted the reduced access citizens can expect during this time.

Schmidt: Requested updates during the process and offered up any help the Commission can provide to support the process.

Williams: Indicated the only impact is that instead of completing all of the improvements in two phases, with one of them completed this fall, it will instead be completed in one single phase in 2018.

B. Update on Shared-Use of Ski Trails at Chester Bowl – Cheryl Skafte, Provisional Assistant Manager, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division

Skafte: Explained that in the Chester Bowl Mini-Master Plan there is language that indicates by June 1st of 2017 there would be a recommendation to the Parks Commission on the shared use of the ski trails. Indicated the City of Duluth Parks staff recommends an extension of Phase I implementation of shared ski trail use during the 2017-2018 season, as outlined in the Chester Bowl Mini-Master Plan. Confirmed that if pedestrians and skiers are unable to coexist in this extended Stage one trial period, the City’s Trails Coordinator will bring forward a formal recommendation to City Council and the Parks Commission on or before June 1st of 2018. Further explained that after this extension, approval of action on Phase II would be requested, which may include building a separate parallel pedestrian trail as in the current plan or limiting Nordic skiing in parts of Chester. Highlighted the steps that will be



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taken during the 2017-2018 season to determine the viability of a shared-use ski trail:

- Semi-permanent signs will be posted at routes designated for shared use and other hiking trails
- Weekly monitoring will be completed by staff during the snow season
- Online user survey will be posted to the City of Duluth’s Parks website by December 1st
- A mailer or postcard will be send to Chester Park neighbors by November 1st, notifying them of this extension and the shared use trails
- Two public meetings will be held in spring 2018 (February/March and April/May)

Schmidt: Requested that this timeline be reflected in the minutes.

Breeuwer: Commented on the two previous comments regarding signage and requested that staff keep the recently approved signage Master Plan on their radar.

Cheryl: Indicated this signage in Chester will not be permanent signage, rather semi-permanent signage to direct traffic and fix signs from last season that were determined to be confusing for users.

Schmidt: Remarked he is happy to see Parks taking leadership and that it is important to end up with a prototype for shared trail use that would provide an example of how to go about resolving conflicts to make sure that shared use works.

Cheryl: Confirmed she will pass around a map that shows the current trail situation in Chester.

Williams: Stated that the Chester Park pilot is not a model to be followed, rather a unique outlier, in that most of the City’s groomed ski trails see comparatively little conflict. Further explained the volume of walkers in Chester is uncommonly high and the volume of skiers in recent years is relatively low.

VIII. Old Business

A. Parks staffing update – Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration, City of Duluth

Williams: Informed the Commission they are reaching the end of a very lengthy Parks Manager hiring process, noting there is one finalist the group really likes. Explained the candidate is interviewing at one other city and will give his determination next week. Indicated that in the event the candidate declines, there is no other candidate from the current pool of applicants they feel comfortable offering the position to, therefore civil service rules dictate that the position cannot be reposted until the list of qualified individuals expires in December.

B. Western Waterfront Trail Mini-Master Plan Update – Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration, City of Duluth

Williams: Indicated that earlier this summer, the City released its recommendation for future use and improvement of the City owned riverfront, noting that this month the City is working on further assessing and developing the recommended option in the following respects:



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- City Project Coordinator Lisa Luukkala and LHB Consultant, Heidi Bringman met with three leaders from the LS&M Railroad to get their input on how to improve the recommended option to support successful and long-term rail operations
 - Ms. Luukkala and Ms. Bringman are currently working to revise the City’s recommendation to reflect this input
 - Hope to present revisions at the September Parks Commission meeting
 - Input provided and plan revisions should not be mistaken as LS&M’s approval of the City’s recommendation, rather willingness to work with the City to improve the option should it be the final option
- Mud Lake Restoration
 - Federal, state and tribal natural resource scientists are working together this month to devise a science-based conceptual design for restoration of Mud Lake
 - The group will follow the science, whether that’s retention of the causeway with penetrating culverts, creation of larger gaps in the causeway, or removal of the causeway altogether
 - Hope to present the interagency conceptual design plan at the September Commission meeting

Schmidt: Questioned when the Commission can anticipate the Western Waterfront Trail being an action item on the agenda.

Williams: Indicated that it’s more important to staff and Mayor Larson to produce the right plan, therefore it will likely be pushed to the end of this year.

IX. Division Manager’s Report

Schmidt: Explained the documents Commissioners received:

- Updated meeting schedule
 - No new dates only room changes
 - Microphones will be utilized at locations outside of the Chambers
- Park Listing
 - Broken up by City district
- Parks Progress Update
 - Draft to provides updates on projects for Commissioners to stay current
 - Monthly update

X. Public Comment

Denette Lynch (public): Requested further explanation of the civil service requirements for the manager position and whether the Assistant Manager position would be reposted in the event a new manager is not hired.

Williams: Clarified that civil service rules require a process of scoring applicants in order to establish a list of eligible candidates, noting that this list represents candidates who meet a minimum standard of qualification for the job. Explained that this certifiable list has a lifespan of six to seven months, and as



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long as this list of technically eligible candidates exists, the position cannot be reposted. Confirmed that in the event they are not able to hire a new manager next week, they will revisit and possibly postpone the decision for hiring an Assistant Manager. Indicated they are blessed with gifted and energetic employees, and while ideal to wait for a new manager, the group has all the vision and capability to move forward.

Mike Casey (public): Introduced himself and affiliation with Friends of West Duluth Parks and Trails. Apologized for length of last month meeting, but indicated the open dialogue was rare and appreciated. Discussed the Western Waterfront Trail and indicated the Friends of West Duluth Parks and Trails believes the assets the City owns and the rail are undervalued by the plan, noting the very expensive run-a-round. Indicated the run-a-round provides safe operation and allows a train to pull up and have the locomotive go around to the other side and pull back instead of shoving back. Explained there are three cars plus the locomotive, with room for additional cars to be assembled if needed in the future. Stated that if the causeway was removed or shortened, and a run-a-round relocated, the expense would be large and negatively affect train operation, limiting the potential for growth. Explained that little discussion regarding maintenance has been brought up at previous meetings, noting that the train folks have been maintaining the rail on their own, which is often overlooked. Described the partnership between the city and the rail that could be established to help maintain both the trail and the rail, noting the income for the rail could be substantially higher if they can continue to operate to Boy Scout Landing. Noted the frequent discussion of access to the river, and indicated that access can mean something different to people, whether putting a boat in the water or just seeing it. Stated the rail has not impeded access to the river or the proposed access points.

Breeuwer: Discussed the run-a-round described by Mr. Casey and indicated that in Lakeside they have the North Shore train, which is a push-pull operation. Noted that this design must be a legal option if currently used at North Shore.

Mike Casey (public): Indicated LS&M Railroad does a shove back without passengers, however they try not to as it requires a great deal of control at the end, noting that North Shore operates on a class three track, not a class one track like LS&M. Encouraged the Commissioners to visit the train and indicated they are hoping to organize a week-day ride for Councilors and Commissioners.

Breeuwer: Described the scenic North Shore track in Lakeside that runs between Superior and London Road, noting it does not affect access.

Schraepfer: Expressed approval of the lengthy discussion at the previous meeting, and indicated that he thinks it's necessary and often missing from the Parks Commission. Indicated that since he joined the Commission, Erik Viking was the last individual with an abstaining vote in any vote he has been a part of. Stated that it would be good for topics that have a lot of citizen impact, to discuss through them, noting that its ok to not agree and move forward.

Andy Webb (public): Introduced himself and affiliation with LS&M Railroad, noting that a pull-pull method is safer. Explained that when they met with Lisa Luokkala and Heidi Bringman, they requested at least an 800 foot siding to do a run-a-round with the locomotive so a pull-pull method can be



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used. Further explained they requested vehicle access for medical emergencies. Referred to the pull-pull method, and indicated he is aware that North Shore Scenic pulls the train out to the bridge in East Duluth and then pushes back to the siding so it can run-a-round. Explained North Shore has had some close calls at the intersections. Referenced the Mud Lake Restoration committee Mr. Williams spoke to earlier and requested being part of this group as a stakeholder.

Williams: Confirmed that in regard to the Western Waterfront Trail plan, rail operations and ecological restoration will not have stakeholder committees comprised primarily of people with positions and preferences. Indicated that the meeting with LS&M Railroad was so they as the rail experts could provide their unique knowledge about how to improve the plan for rail purposes. Stated that the inter-agency scientists who are assembling to advise on restoration at Mud Lake, are doing so as a purely scientific enterprise, confirming there will be no one present who is not a professional natural resource scientist. Responded to Commissioner Schraepfers' comments and indicated that although most plans brought to the Commission are approved unanimously, it also reflects a much more involved and in-depth public engagement process that has been put into place over the last few years. Explained that this process provides the opportunity for plan changes prior to being asked for action by the Commission.

Rachael Graham (public): Introduced herself as Duluth resident in the Fond du Lac neighborhood near Perch Lake, indicating she would like to voice objection to part of the Western Waterfront plan. Referenced the site map and noted the proposed amenities at Perch Lake being 8-10 parking stalls, beach access, and a porta john. Indicated that the access is objectionable for three reasons:

- It would require destruction of wetlands
- Currently the neighborhood is very private and the addition of the Perch Lake access would change the character of the neighborhood
 - Public beach into the neighborhood and increased traffic
- The proposed parking lot is in the front yard of a resident's house
 - 10ft off their living room window

Rachael Graham (public): Referenced the pictures of the proposed Perch Lake plan and indicated the pictures used are misleading and do not do a good job of indicating where the current park is and where proposed amenities would be in comparison to current elements of the area, including resident's homes.

Breeuwer: Indicated that the plan is currently in a draft phase and requested clarification whether the resident whose living room would be next to the parking lot is in fact ten feet from the proposed parking lot or the drawing is incorrect.

Rachael Graham (public): Indicated she is unsure what the plans are for this home and whether the City would buy it as it's in such close proximity to the proposed parking lot.

Breeuwer: Indicated that site plans often consider right of ways and requested clarification of where the home is in proximity to this.

Rachael Graham (public): Confirmed the proposed parking lot is on a right of way and the home is



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very close to this.

Vogtman: Referenced the documents Ms. Graham shared and questioned what the blue X indicated.

Rachael Graham (public): Confirmed that this is the location she assumes she is standing when taking a picture of the area, noting the home is just north of this.

Edmondson: Requested clarification if Ms. Graham is stating the wetland is in this homeowner's front yard.

Rachael Graham (public): Confirmed yes, it is in their front yard, and that the homeowner mows up to a certain point. Indicated the wetland must be owned by the City as their planning on getting rid of it according to the Perch Lake plan.

Breeuwer: Indicated that Lisa Luokkala is not present, however referenced the culvert and questioned how high the road is at this area and whether a culvert would be high enough to allow paddle access underneath it.

Rachael Graham (public): Confirmed the plan does state the culvert would allow boat access.

Vogtman: Thanked Ms. Graham for bringing her concerns to the Commission and indicated as the District #5 representative, he will look into it further.

Rachael Graham (public): Indicated herself and a group of ten neighbors would like to see the Perch Lake access remain on Highway 23.

Williams: Provided context to the Western Waterfront Trail plan and indicated this is a preliminary and mildly speculative conceptual plan, noting that at this site the MN DNR plans to perform a major restoration project. Explained the DNR will be remediating contaminants, restoring open water, and restoring wetlands, therefore their project will in itself have a public input process. Stated that the DNR project design will set the stage for how Duluth citizens will best access the public water in the future. Compared this area to Grassy Point, which prior to completion of the DNR restoration plan, did have a Mini-Master Plan developed. Confirmed they are re-opening the Grassy Point Mini-Master Plan, which will ultimately come back to the Commission in a different form. Explained that the opportunity seen at Perch Lake is the unique availability of a fully protected and sizable clean body of water that is connected to the open river and fully accessible by boat, through what will be a larger culvert. Noted that from a paddlers prospective, this will provide a rare opportunity for beginner paddlers. Confirmed he has taken the comments to heart and will look into making the plan strictly narrative or provide an asterisk that indicates the site map is only a map.

Vogtman: Questioned if there was a rough date of when the DNR will host public meetings.

Williams: Indicated the DNR has an open funding request for this project and are optimistic they will receive notification of funding sometime this fall, therefore the exact dates of construction are



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unknown. Explained that when restoring wetlands, the intention is to remove and reuse large volumes of sediment with an end goal of restoring open water.

Oswald (ISD 709 School Board Liaison Alternate): Questioned if there was a necessity in providing a connection between the St. Louis River and Perch Lake as a beginner kayak area.

Williams: Explained that the rationale for opening up this connection is ecological, and most of the potential public access benefits are byproducts of a mostly ecological restoration project.

Oswald (ISD 709 School Board Liaison Alternate): Questioned if the size of the culvert is for access or to provide recirculation benefits.

Williams: Indicated that the DNR’s mission is to provide better public access for fishing.

Rachael Graham (public): Indicated that roughly 25ft from the existing culvert already provides access to the river.

Bill Lynch (public): Questioned if there is a conceal and carry ordinance, similar to an ordinance for tobacco use.

Williams: Confirmed he will research the topic further and report back to Mr. Lynch.

Vogtman: Shared that Morgan Park is hosting a community pow wow tomorrow evening at 4:30pm.

Williams: Informed Commission that in regard to President Schmidt’s earlier request for a special meeting, the Attorney’s office has confirmed that open meeting law does not allow for special sessions.

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:27 pm. Moved by Commissioner Breeuwer. Second by Commissioner Vogtman.

XII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday September 13, 2017 at 5pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.