



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of October 11, 2017

City Hall – Room 303
411 W 1st 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, Dudley Edmondson, Tjaard Breeuwer, Dennis Isernhagen, Tiersa Wodash, Dean Vogtman, Kristin Bergerson, Britt Rohrbaugh, Art Johnston (ISD 709 Liaison)

Absent: Erik Torch, Michael Schraepfer, Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison), Alanna Oswald (ISD 709 School Board Liaison Alternate), Frank Jewell (St. Louis County Board Liaison)

III. Approval of September 13 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Breeuwer motioned for approval of the September 13, 2017 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Wodash. Unanimously approved.

Schmidt: Reminded those in attendance that the Commission is committed to an open and respectful public process. Informed that the bylaws state members of the public who wish to speak to an issue may do so for a time period not to exceed three minutes. Suggested a brief pause between speakers to allow for reflection. Recited the vision of the Parks Commission and the fourth guiding principle of the Duluth Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

- Ensure Equitable Access
 - Overcome economic limitations
 - Ensure quality facilities
 - Overcome physical limitations
 - Provide for multiple cultures

Schmidt: Recited text from Lucie B. Amundsen's book, *Locally Laid*. Informed Commissioners that the agenda has been amended and the Spirit Mountain Plan action requested item has been taken off and moved to the November meeting.

IV. Presentations

- A. Parks and Trails Access for All, Margot Imdieke Cross, Accessibility Specialist, Minnesota State Council on Disability (informational)

Cross: Introduced herself and indicated she is the Accessibility Specialist with the Minnesota State Council on Disability. Informed Commissioners that she's been a wheelchair user for most of her life, approaching outdoor wilderness, parks and trails from that perspective. Summarized her intent to present on access in general, while sharing the presentation she gave for the Legacy Parks and Trails Committee. Explained that she brought a couple wheelchairs and with Commissioner Crosby's assistance, spent the afternoon with Parks staff exploring parks and trail surfaces. Indicated that bringing the chairs along allowed staff to experience the environments firsthand. Referenced her

presentation slides and shared the following statistics:

- 20% of the population under the age of 65 has a disability defined by law
- Those with visible disabilities are the minority within the community

Cross: Indicated the vast majority of individuals have disabilities that cannot be seen, such as respiratory, cardiac, vision loss, hearing loss, learning disabilities, or mental health problems. Noted that in terms of those over the age of 65, the percentage of those with a disability increases to over 50%. Stated that older individuals typically have multiple disabilities. Explained that she often hears comments about why grab bars in a restroom or other modifications are necessary. Confirmed that grab bars are more often used by individuals with ambulatory disabilities versus those in wheelchairs. Stated that people of all ages enjoy the adventure and nature. Informed Commissioners that Minnesota comes in at about 20% below the National average for both disability categories, which she disagrees with. Listed disabilities types: ambulatory, cognitive, hearing, independent living, self-care, vision. Indicated that according to the American Community Survey, approximately 265,800 Minnesotans have ambulatory disabilities, with difficulty walking and climbing stairs disproportionately affecting older adults. Cited statistic from the Department of Public Safety that indicated approximately 500,000 Minnesotans are actively using disability parking certificates that require a mobility disability to qualify for. Defined the ADA definition of disability:

- Physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity
 - Breathing, seeing, hearing, walking, learning, taking care of oneself
- A record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment
 - Having this record provides protection under the ADA

Cross: Indicated that individuals who are discriminated against not because they have a disability but because they associate with those who do, are partially protected under this act. Shared example of parents who have been denied employment opportunities because their child has a disability. Explained Access '92 and the State of Minnesota's work under the guidance of former Governor Perpich and Senator Freeman to put aside \$29,000,000 for accessibility projects. Indicated the goal of this was to make all state buildings and facilities fully accessible by 1993. Explained that although this didn't happen, it was a start. Summarized the work done to define, survey, and prioritize state buildings and facilities, noting that it is still ongoing. Shared her experience working with the DNR on the State Park Access Promotion Project and their initial findings that not one State Park was fully accessible. Stated that after this experience she urged the Legacy Committee to make accessibility a priority when funding projects. Discussed parks in Duluth that may have some accessible features but not others, creating a situation where individuals have to choose or compromise when making a decision on what location to visit. Stated the importance of funding and commitment providing accessibility when completing site improvements.

Schmidt: Thanked Mrs. Cross for her presentation and indicated the Commission was looking forward to it. Welcomed any questions or comments.

Breeuwer: Referred to the information regarding state parks and their lack of full accessibility and questioned if Mrs. Cross believed it was better for the City to aim for one location with full accessibility versus multiple locations with limited accessibility.



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Cross: Stated that this would be a starting point that could later be expanded based on park popularity and usage. Indicated that because Duluth parks are so unique from one another, it wouldn't seem plausible to make only one accessible. Clarified that every activity offered may not be accessible, however every opportunity that can be made accessible should be made accessible (camping sites, bathrooms, fishing piers, etc.).

Isernhagen: Thanked Mrs. Cross for her presentation and shared his philosophy in looking at what a person can do, not what they cannot. Encouraged Commission and Parks Division to keep access in mind when moving forward with park improvements.

Crosby: Stated that Access North has accessible tents available for free use, and encouraged others to spread the word.

Breeuwer: Highlighted the presentations broad focus on disabilities, noting that often accessibility is aimed at mainly ambulatory disabilities, whereas items like signage require other accessibility considerations. Questioned if there were other guidelines the City should be considering in terms of parks, facilities, or natural spaces.

Shoberg: Confirmed that in the ADA, there are guidelines and codes that discuss how and what the best practices for implementation are, noting it covers trails and signage.

Schmidt: Requested feedback from Parks staff after touring with Margot.

Luukkala: Indicated the experience was extremely informative and highlighted opportunities within parks to provide better accessibility.

Shoberg: Pointed out how different it is to meet the ADA code versus meeting standards of those experiencing a park or trail firsthand. Shared his experience touring trails in a wheelchair, noting factors like side slopes as being important in terms of accessibility.

Schmidt: Requested clarification on the agenda, specifically the Spirit Mountain Master Plan.

Jim Filby Williams: Clarified that the Commission will not receive the full Spirit Mountain presentation or be asked to vote, as they City is committed to making sure the information is shared before a decision is made. Indicated that tonight's meeting will provide a preview of the plan in preparation for the November meeting when the full plan will be shared.

B. Spirit Mountain Master Plan Introduction – Adam Fulton, Manager of Community Planning Division, City of Duluth

Fulton: Thanked President Schmidt and Commissioners and introduced himself as the Manager of the Community Planning Division with the City of Duluth. Explained they have been working with Spirit Mountain and EcoSign Resort Consultants on an update to the Spirit Mountain Master Plan. Indicated that at last night's Planning Commission meeting, many individuals in the audience were interested in participating, and being they have not brought the plan forward at a public meeting, their new



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intent is to bring the Master Plan forward at the November Parks Commission meeting in a public format, providing better accessibility for public viewing. Confirmed that the full presentation from Community Planner John Kelley, will take place in November. Talked briefly about the planning process, stating it started roughly a year ago when they looked at how the lower area functioned, and later expanded, with the help of the Spirit Mountain Board, to include the upper portion and chalet area. Confirmed they've explored access roads, parking, and storm water as part of the Master planning process. Indicated the plan has been approved by the Spirit Mountain Board and Planning Commission, with the intention of November approval from the Parks Commission before final adoption by City Council. Clarified that the Master Plan is not a funding document, rather guidance set forth for Spirit Mountain Recreation growth, development, and change over time.

Schmidt: Welcomed questions and comments from Staff and Commissioners. Requested clarification from Mr. Filby Williams regarding the relationship between Parks and Spirit Mountain.

Filby Williams: Explained that Spirit Mountain is an authority of the City of Duluth, therefore proximally the Spirit Mountain Recreation Authority owns and controls all of the assets, however if the Authority were to disappear, the City of Duluth would be the ultimate owner of the property. Indicated that the Parks and Recreation Division integrates Spirit Mountain into its vision. Explained that after the Master Plan is established, they will work with Spirit Mountain to submit a request for regional designation which opens the opportunity for Legacy Parks and Trails Funds.

Wodash: Indicated that in general, the Commission would appreciate a formal presentation a month prior to being asked to vote upon it.

Schmidt: Reiterated Commissioner Wodash's request to Mr. Fulton and indicated the Parks Commission would like to vote on Master Plans after a formal presentation and comment period.

Fulton: Clarified that the Spirit Mountain Master Plan is not like the Mini-Master Plans the Parks Commission is used to seeing, rather a vision plan for Spirit Mountain that includes ideas on how they will adapt and change in the future. Noted the decisions for change are up to Spirit Mountain Authority, however because of the unique relationship with the City, they felt it was important to bring before the Planning and Parks Commissions.

Filby Williams: Indicated that staff agrees in striving for a month between a plans presentation and the Commission's vote upon it. Assured Commissioners they will stick to this agreement moving forward.

Schmidt: Questioned if there will be another public comment session outside of the November meeting.

Fulton: Confirmed the public meeting would take place at the regular November Parks Commission meeting.

Schmidt: Questioned if a vote is needed before the end of the year.



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Vogtman: Agreed with President Schmidt and indicated he would appreciate a presentation of the Master Plan a month prior to voting.

Fulton: Explained that they will defer to the recommendation of the Parks Commission and Staff as to how to proceed with the Master Plan.

Schmidt: Requested clarification on where they should direct questions to.

Fulton: Confirmed that himself, City Planner John Kelley, or Parks staff can answer questions related to the Spirit Mountain Master Plan.

Schmidt: Indicated that it would be helpful for the Commission if stakeholders were present at the November presentation. Welcomed any additional questions or comments.

Denette Lynch (public): Suggested the Master Plan document be reviewed as there are many errors. Noted its reference of a magic carpet installed on the tubing hill which is not accurate. Expressed concern that one of the major focuses with this plan was addressing the feasibility of a road that runs from the top to the bottom, and questioned if these documents would be coming at a later time.

Fulton: Thanked Mrs. Lynch and clarified that there was some analysis on the road, however it will be added as appendix at a later time. Indicated he'd be happy to share this information.

Schmidt: Requested clarification from Mr. Filby Williams on whether they have done a facilities audit on the Spirit Mountain buildings.

Filby Williams: Confirmed they have not as it is not a direct responsibility of the City.

Mike Casey (public): Indicated that on the City website the Spirit Mountain Authority is directed to Spirit Mountain Recreation's website, which does not provide information about the Authority or when it meets. Questioned if the Master Plan draft would be available online.

Fulton: Confirmed that the draft is posted on the Planning's website under small area plans.

C. Lower Chester Planning Process – Jim Shoberg, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division (informational)

Shoberg: Introduced himself and involvement with the Lower Chester Park Mini-Master Plan. Explained the public process that was laid out, noting the twelve stakeholder meetings with Neighbors of Lower Chester and the Duluth Area Hockey Association (DAHA). Indicated that after these meetings, they moved to a neighborhood input period, in which they collected feedback at a public meeting and through an online public survey. Stated that from the survey results, they will refine the plan and post online for a second two-week comment period. Added that after this time the plans will be finalized before seeking a vote at the November Parks Commission meeting, followed by City Council. Referenced the presentation slides and explained the interim winter 2017/18 plan calls for two hockey rinks during the upcoming season, with open space for other



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recreational activities.

Wodash: Questioned if one of the rinks will be utilized for open skating and what the playground area will be used for during the winter.

Shoberg: Confirmed the playground area will be used for open space and will be separated with temporary fencing. Further explained there will be a pleasure rink in addition to the two larger rinks, with snow storage in the back. Noted this temporary plan was developed to meet the needs of both groups during the upcoming season.

Filby Williams: Explained that the goal of the plan is to maximize positive community use of Lower Chester Park by improving and expanding opportunities for non-hockey activities in the park, while also preserving Lower Chester as a viable space for youth hockey. Stated that in recent years, the park has not accomplished both goals, therefore the plan aims to accommodate both groups by reducing the hockey rinks from three to two, with attempts to locate and size the second rink to allow for more non-hockey related activities. Explained the plans will require additional co-investment by hockey and the City to improve site drainage, providing a usable green space outside of the hockey season, while also accommodating space for a new playground.

Schmidt: Welcomed any questions.

Wodash: Referenced the dashed black line in the site plan and questioned if that is the direction which the natural water runs at the current site.

Shoberg: Confirmed the dark line represents connectivity to the site and identify potential pedestrian connections.

Wodash: Questioned if the building will remain open with volunteer staff during the winter season.

Shoberg: Confirmed yes.

Wodash: Questioned where the next closest rink for free skating is located.

Shoberg: Stated Glen Avon may be the closest location.

Bergerson: Questioned what team from DAHA will utilize the rinks at Chester.

Filby Williams: Informed that the youth group will operate under a combined name of Congdon Lower Chester Hockey.

Schmidt: Questioned who the official representative is for hockey at this location.

Filby Williams: Explained that they have an umbrella agreement with the DAHA which covers all of the community hockey spaces, however each local area has an independent hockey association, with the Congdon Lower Chester Hockey group utilizing the rinks at Lower Chester Park. Reiterated



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that the interim plan may differ from the approved Mini Master Plan.

Schmidt: Stated that when this issue first came about, Commissioners received emails from DAHA indicating that the growth of the hockey program was positive. Questioned if there was a possibility that DAHA would become too large for the current space at Lower Chester Park.

Shoberg: Indicated they've had this conversation with DAHA and confirmed that if the program grows too large for the space, alternative options will be sought.

Schmidt: Questioned if Congdon Hockey was invited by Lower Chester to utilize the space after they lost their home.

Shoberg: Confirmed yes.

Schmidt: Indicated that he has met with Friends of Lower Chester many times and has great hope that if the arrangement can work out, it becomes a wonderful model for the City, displaying how multiple user groups can reach an understanding and maximize use of the park. Questioned how City staff has incorporated input and ideas from Friends of Lower Chester.

Shoberg: Stated that in a typical parks planning process, you can expect two to three stakeholder meetings, whereas in this situation, twelve meetings were held. Further explained that the biggest takeaway from Neighbors of Lower Chester is their request for a four seasons park with usable green space in the summer, a playground, and access to the adjoining green spaces.

Wodash: Requested more specific information on fixing the drainage issues at Lower Chester.

Shoberg: Explained that in the planning process, they do not go into engineering; however, from their storm water engineer and soil boring information, they have an understanding of how the land will be improved with a sub-surface drain tile system and top soil improvements.

Vogtman: Referenced the drainage issues and questioned if project cost had been determined

Shoberg: Indicated they have preliminary figures; however, they are still collecting data.

Vogtman: Questioned if community gardens will be part of the plan.

Shoberg: Explained that the Seeds of Success program had utilized this space at one time, however the site was not successful and abandoned.

Rohrbaugh: Referenced growth of DAHA and questioned who determines when they've grown too large for this site.

Shoberg: Clarified that with this plan, they are confirming the program cannot expand with placement of a third rink. Indicated parking will be part of the agreement with user groups at this site.



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Schmidt: Requested clarification on whether the green space on 4th Street was part of the plan.

Shoberg: Confirmed that at the corner of 4th and 15th, there is a green space that is actually the top of a potable water reservoir. Further explained that there is a small leak at this site that will require future repair, with the space belonging to Public Works not Parks.

Crosby: Discussed growth of the hockey program and requested clarification on whether a different location would be used instead of, or in addition to the space at Lower Chester.

Shoberg: Explained that this will have to be determined at the time it happens, with DAHA playing a lead in determining whether a new or existing facility will be used.

Wendy Saliin (public): Introduced herself and involvement with Neighbors of Lower Chester. Indicated the organization has leased the space from the City of Duluth since September 15th, 2011. Explained that on September 15th of this year, the lease auto-renewed for a one-year term. Stated their hope for a year-round park. Questioned if after the Mini-Master Plan is in place, would Lower Chester be a welcoming gathering space that includes organized hockey, or will it become a hockey facility with a playground. Explained that the plan as presented shows a rink that's increased in size. Indicated that after six months of meetings facilitated by the Parks Division seeking a compromise, the current plan is a confusing shift in direction. Indicated that future plans need to look at more than how to physically share the space as hockey leaves a nine-month footprint at the park with the current drainage issues. Shared her concerns with the proposed location of the playground. Explained that Lower Chester is 1.5 acres and DAHA has seven total sites, with the next largest area being double the size of Lower Chester. Indicated that in addition to the other spaces having more acreage, most have designated parking lots. Confirmed that Neighbors of Lower Chester do not wish to exclude hockey, however they are questioning how much hockey the park can sustain. Urged Commissioners to take a careful look at the plan to ensure it meets the goals and priorities of the City.

Edmondson: Questioned why the plan calls for two rinks versus one.

Shoberg: Referenced the draft plan and stated that when you go through past agreements there has been anywhere from three to two rinks, with a fourth open skating area. Indicated that if you look at the configuration of the smaller rink, it does not meet the programmatic needs of the hockey organization. Explained that two rinks allow for enough space programmatically speaking.

Edmondson: Indicated that from the explanation given, there has always been too much rink space in comparison to available park space.

Filby Williams: Explained that from their consultation with the hockey groups, they believe this is the minimum number of hockey rinks needed at this site in order to have a viable youth hockey organization at Lower Chester. Indicated that the City's goal is to maximize positive use of the park. Established that 30-40% of youth participating in this program are from the neighborhood. Stated that the Mini-Master Plan they bring forward will require the drainage be improved so that it can be utilized for other activities.



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Wodash: Questioned if the size of the rink required for league games is met by the proposed second rink.

Shoberg: Confirmed the second rink does meet the size necessary.

Wodash: Requested confirmation if the existing permanent hockey rink is bigger than necessary.

Shoberg: Confirmed yes and noted it's a substantial structure with concrete and boards.

Breeuwer: Referenced the plan drawings and questioned if Mr. Shoberg would be able to add diagrams that displayed old and current situations. Noted the helpfulness of pictures that display the seasonal nature of the park.

Shoberg: Indicated this will be part of the presentation.

Vogtman: Questioned if Lower Chester Park has a Community Club meeting at this site.

Shoberg: Confirmed that Neighbors of Lower Chester meets in the building located at the corner of the park.

Vogtman: Questioned if the building would be part of the plan and whether it is sufficient for the Community Club's needs.

Shoberg: Stated that the building is sinking, and it's not clear how long the existing structure will last. Confirmed the City does not have interest in investing significant funds to a facility that is eventually going to fail structurally.

Vogtman: Questioned whether DAHA would be contributing funds to this project.

Shoberg: Indicated there will be co-investment by all organizations.

Vogtman: Referenced the building and questioned if will be part of the presentation.

Shoberg: Confirmed the building will be left as is and remain open until it is no longer safe.

Art Johnston (ISD 709 Liaison): Noted that although he is not taking a position, it's important to remember Congdon lost their rink and warming house which was very controversial.

Jason Wall (public): Indicated that social policy is healthcare policy. Stated his intent to discuss the public health implications of the Mini-Master Plan decision. Indicated that Lower Chester Park is in a poor neighborhood which directly relates to life expectancy. Referenced the Health is More Than Healthcare Study from St. Louis County, and stated that if you live in zip code 55805, which Lower Chester resides in, you can expect to live nearly nine years less than the neighboring zip code 55812. Stated that in the 55812 zip code they make 78% greater medium income, whereas in the heart of the Congdon neighborhood it's 139% greater. Expressed his concern in allowing a pay-to-play group



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largely outside of the service area to dominate Lower Chester Park. Explained the neighborhood's need for a four season park for all ages, and indicated a price tag cannot be put on health and happiness. Stated that hockey should enhance Lower Chester Park not define it.

Filby Williams: Explained that they agree with neighborhood groups that past rink size has reduced or diminished other uses of the park. Indicated their current aim and commitment is to create a true win-win situation for Lower Chester Park.

Patty Sobczak (public): Introduced herself and stated she has lived in Lower Chester since 2001, noting her involvement with Neighbors of Lower Chester. Explained that in 2012 the Congdon Park hockey program lost its rink and the neighborhood group met and decided to extend a welcome to Congdon for rink use. Stated it initially worked well with just one rink, however since that time, the program has grown 75%. Explained that the parking has become horrendous, as no off-street parking exists for the space. Stated that each time the hockey program is using the park; they park illegally. Urged Commissioners to remember this when considering expanding the hockey program and expressed her worry for elderly neighbors not being able to have an ambulance get to their home in a safe and timely manner. Explained she has called the non-emergency police line repeatedly, and she received a call from a Duluth Police Officer stating that Congdon Hockey has no other choice. Indicated that this sends a message that Congdon hockey is above the law. Explained that when they were asked to revisit the Mini-Master Plan, Neighbors of Lower Chester were tasked with putting together a vision of what they saw as a four-season park. Indicated that in April of 2017 they presented this to City staff. Requested Commissioners look closely at the dimensions of the plan and note the playground space in comparison to hockey rinks.

Wodash: Questioned if the presentation on Lower Chester Park would show dimensions. Requested more information about the current hockey program, including current attendance and what is required to facilitate games.

Shoberg: Confirmed they will include dimensions and request more information about the hockey program.

Patty Sobczak (public): Indicated the space was originally used for just little-mites, however the program expanded to include other age groups, thus resulting in a need for more rink space.

Rohrbaugh: Discussed the percentage of space being used for non-hockey use at Lower Chester, indicating that 30-40% of kids are playing hockey, however this isn't all kids. Indicated that a lot of Duluth is dedicated to hockey and stated the importance of a firm agreement for rink use when hockey is not in session. Expressed desire to have the free skating rink size reflect the communities need.

Vogtman: Agreed with Commissioner Rohrbaugh and added that the parking situation is bad, particularly with snow.

Wodash: Questioned if public use of the hockey rink outside of hockey program time would be part of an agreement, and who would maintain the ice.



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Filby Williams: Indicated they are looking at the possibility of significant changes to the size, location and orientation of the second rink, noting that what they see today may not be what is presented at next month's presentation. Listed the ways in which the City has not adequately executed its oversight responsibilities of hockey over the last couple winters:

- letting the hockey program expand their footprint to accommodate growth
- permitting play hours to expand
- not working closely enough with Congdon and Lower Chester to ensure free public pleasure skating opportunities

Breeuwer: Referenced the timeline Mr. Shoberg described and stated that because they've only seen the interim winter plan, a presentation of the plan at least a month before taking a vote is ideal.

Shoberg: Confirmed they will accommodate this request and provide a presentation at the November meeting with action requested at the December meeting.

Isernhagen: Questioned if Commissioners could get a copy of the plan the Neighbors of Lower Chester put together.

Shoberg: Confirmed they can accommodate this request.

D. Hartley North West Hills Blow Down Cleanup Project Update, Jim Shoberg, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division (informational)

Shoberg: Explained that the project is in response to the July 2016 blowdown. Referenced visual of Hartley Park and indicated the Master Plan called for ecological enhancements in the park, which was impacted by the July storm. Indicated that after consulting with the DNR and Fire Department it was determined that the blowdown trees in the northwest corner of the park are a significant fire hazard. Stated the vast majority of the property in this area is owned by St. Louis County; therefore, they will work closely with the County for cleanup along Howard Gneson Road. Explained City staff has met with the County, Hartley Nature Center, and the Land Department to discuss what can be done to clean up the hazard trees, while doing something extra outside of a normal timber harvest. Informed Commission that the difference between this project and a normal timber harvest is they are only taking down and damaged trees, excluding any wetland areas from the harvest. Explained that the sale is out for bid, which could mean an access road near Howard Gneson before the winter season, which is important in ensuring the least amount of damage to the vegetation and ground. Explained that the landing area will be restored with native vegetation and the access road will be obliterated and erased after the harvest is complete.

Edmondson: Questioned if the yellow area in the diagram is the only area with blowdown.

Shoberg: Clarified that blowdown is a natural part of the ecological landscape and although it is present in other areas, the small patches that are outside of this project area will not pose the fire hazard. Explained they do not want to clean up the smaller patches of blow down because they add diversity to the nature based park.



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Edmondson: Questioned if the segment of trail in the blowdown area will be restored after cleanup.

Shoberg: Confirmed yes.

Vogtman: Thanked Mr. Shoberg and questioned where clean up funds were being allocated from.

Shoberg: Indicated that in theory they should break even; however, any excess funds from timber sales will be put towards the restoration of the staging area and access road.

Art Johnston (ISD 709 Liaison): Stated that the school district has a portion of land northwest of the park. Questioned if this area was impacted.

Shoberg: Confirmed they looked at this area with the Fire Department and though it had some risk, it will be addressed separately.

Art Johnston (ISD 709 Liaison): Expressed the School Districts desire to sell this portion of the park.

Filby Williams: Explained the City has submitted a grant which is currently under consideration by the State. Indicated that these funds would allow them to acquire a targeted portion of the area owned by Duluth Public Schools, which includes all the sensitive wetlands and a cold-water tributary of Tischer Creek.

Beth Peterson (public): Indicated she is a representative from the Urban Forest Commission, attending tonight as they have interest in this issue. Expressed their concern regarding what the public education and outreach would look like.

Shoberg: Confirmed that a mailer to residents in the area has been sent out, as well as two mailers from the county, and a press release. Indicated they will post signage at entrance points that discuss what is happening.

E. Western Waterfront Trail Update (informational)

- i. Opening Remarks, Lisa Luukkala, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division (informational)

Luukkala: Introduced herself and indicated she will provide an update to the Western Waterfront Trail (WWFT) plan, similar to the format she's used at previous meetings over the past year. Discussed the following topic areas:

- Project Goals for the St. Louis River Corridor Initiative
 - Support environmental restoration
 - Enrich neighborhood quality of life
 - Attract new homebuyers
 - Establish new visitor destination
 - Stimulate economic development
- WWFT Project Overview and Scope
 - Public planning process began in August 2016 to determine future recreational use of

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- mostly City-owned, 10-12 mile corridor along St. Louis River in West Duluth
 - Study area includes existing 3.3 mile long pedestrian trail, historic rail bed, and five existing or planned river access points
 - Portion of the historic rail bed has been leased by the City to the nonprofit Lake Superior Mississippi Railroad (LSMR) for a seasonal fee-based excursion
 - Master Plan goals included:
 - Increase connectivity from adjacent neighborhoods to the St. Louis River Estuary
 - Increase recreational and development opportunities within and along the St. Louis River Corridor
 - Facilitate a stakeholder community-engagement process to gain significant input on the future use of the area
 - Enhance neighborhood quality of life
 - Restore and protect natural habitat along the trail corridor
 - Determine whether to retain and potentially improve the remaining riverfront rail line and renew the LSMR lease for excursion rail trips
 - Master Planning Options Explored
 - Extend and improve the WWFT as cited in the 1979 WWFT Master Plan
 - Re-brand the WWFT as a heritage trail that celebrates and interprets the rich culture and natural heritage of the corridor
 - Develop potential new river access nodes opposite of Tallas Island and at the area known as Slag Point
 - Develop potential new canoe/kayak water trail entry points at Munger Landing, Boy Scout Landing, and Perch Lake
 - Decide the future use of the City-owned riverfront
 - Create synergy between the Water Trail, the WWFT, and the excursion rail (if the City determines to extend the excursion trail lease)
 - Mini-Master Planning Process
 - Commenced public process in September 2016
 - 5 three-hour stakeholder meetings with 39 representatives
 - Public Meeting #1
 - Online Survey
 - Phone Survey of the 5th District
 - Field visits & rail assessment
 - Public Meeting #2
 - Further analysis of Mud Lake Restoration
 - Input from LSMR on recommendation
 - Update to Parks Commission
 - Defined Next Steps
 - November – Draft Mini-Master Plan presented to Parks Commission
 - Draft of Mini-Master Plan posted online for 2 weeks for public review and comment
 - November 29 – Review of comments by Parks Commission Trails Committee
 - December – Parks Commission Review of Final Plan
 - January 2018 – City Council Presentation
 - Vision Clarification
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- Information from stakeholder workshops and online survey data was collected to confirm vision
 - What makes the area unique?
 - What does heritage mean to public?
 - What makes up our heritage?
 - What does the future of WWFT and Park look like to public?
- Recommendation and Next Steps
 - Rename trail to better reflect river and region
 - Options could be a co-name to include an English and Ojibwe name
 - St. Louis River Heritage Trail – Gitche Gami Ziibi
 - The Great Lake River Trail – Chi Gami Zibing

Luukkala: Indicated that at the June 2017 Parks Commission meeting, they made the recommendation, with support from Mayor Larson, to find a balance between the health of the river, trail, recreation users, and the continuation of LSMR. Pointed out the plan's five proposed access sites: Lower Spirit, Slag Point, Munger Landing, Boy Scout Landing, and Perch Lake. Stated the overall recommendation on the trail and rail alignment from segment one through seven. Referenced the PowerPoint, stating the stars on the plan indicated key decision making points. Highlighted the following decision points:

- Mouth of Stewart Creek
 - Water inhibited by existing rail bed
 - Contaminants in the area that could potentially be cleaned if rail bed was removed
- Wire Mill Pond
 - Current remediation project at US Steel Site where MPCA and EPA expressed desire to open water in restoration effort
 - Could route the trail inland with no option for rail
 - Opted for rail option at this location
- Mud Lake
 - Opportunity to do an upland trail through existing US Steel site with potential collaboration with US Steel
 - Potential for highest environmental impact for the river by opening area up which inhibits a wetland area
 - Recommend prioritizing the health of the river over rail or trail options, calling for a removal of the causeway here

Luukkala: Explained that after the last Parks Commission presentation they reconvened with various stakeholders to determine what Mud Lake restoration would look like, including potential gains for the community and the health of the river. Indicated that they have experience doing similar studies such as Kingsbury Bay with state, federal and tribal partners. Stated the City entered into an agreement with Barr Engineering and Fred Rozumalski, a Senior Landscape Architect and Ecologist, to conduct a workshop with natural resource scientists and stakeholders to examine the Mud Lake Restoration Concept.

- ii. Mud Lake Concept Restoration Presentation, Fred Rozumalski, Senior Landscape Architect RLA, Barr Engineering

Rozumalski: Introduced himself and explained he will present the results from the group of scientists that took part in the workshop. Referenced list of groups that were at the workshop. Indicated the group met in August and was tasked with developing a science based plan to restore Mud Lake in a manner that would significantly contribute to the St. Louis River Estuary as a whole. Stated that the City made it clear that the scientists should follow the science wherever it led, with the understanding that the City would be deferent to their conclusions. Explained that recreation was completely separate from their study. Stated that from the workshop, they came up with goals and sketches for what restoration could look like at Mud Lake. Referenced diagram of St. Louis River and Mud Lake and indicated it is the spawning grounds and nursery for many species of fish, birds, invertebrates, reptiles, and amphibians. Referenced an aerial picture of the estuary and indicated it has been highly impacted by human activities over the past 150 years. Stated the goal has been to improve the health of the estuary in order to feed the habitat and improve Lake Superior. Focused on Mud Lake and stated that coastal wetlands are significant value to the St. Louis River and Lake Superior. Explained they look at the shrub stop and wet meadow because it has water from zero to two feet deep, and offers ideal conditions for productivity. Described ideal feeding grounds as protected marsh areas. Commented on water movement through Mud Lake currently and historically, noting that the area is not a lake but a side channel of the river. Stated that by reviewing historical documents, they can see a deep pocket of water was in the center of Mud Lake. Indicated the flushing in and out of water into Mud Lake is important because it brings in oxygen and fresh nutrients. Explained that this movement of water is primary in the restoration of Mud Lake. Discussed how Mud Lake has been compromised over the years:

- On the south end of Mud Lake wood waste from old wood mill
 - Made the bay shallow
 - Displaces habitat
 - Wood decomposition uses oxygen
- Filling of the wetland
 - The causeway is effective in preventing water circulation here
 - With the causeway, contaminants are allowed to come in but not flush out
 - Dioxins primary pollutant
- Sedimentation
 - The water does not filter through Mud Lake as it should
 - Sediment comes down from St. Louis River into this shallow bay and settles out
 - Mud Lake has lost the deep pool for overwintering fish
- Invasive plant species
 - Hybrid cattail and reed canary grass are present
 - Displace native species

Rozumalski: Highlighted the restoration goals determined from the scientist workshop, noting it was separate from recreation and aimed at the environmental health of Mud Lake:

- Address wetland impacts and proposed restoration
 - Removing the majority of the causeway was recommended
 - Excavating legacy wood waste on south end of Mud Lake
 - Remediating contaminant materials
 - Controlling invasive plant species
 - Reverse human impacts on Mud Lake that inhibit river flow and sediment exchange

- Restore native coastal marsh and open water habitats
 - Increase the diversity and abundance of species that use Mud Lake
 - Particularly migratory water fowl, muskies, lake sturgeon, wild rice, piping clover

Rozumalski: Discussed the design guidelines determined from the scientist workshop:

- Use Mud Lake's historic form, size, and function as a template for restoration design to remove impairments and restore habitats
- Develop a design that will not require active maintenance to sustain habitat over time
 - Restoring water flow
- Focus on conservation targets from the 2002 Lower St. Croix River Habitat Plan
 - Protect habitats and restore breeding populations

Rozumalski: Shared the design concept recommended from experts at the workshop, noting that much of it is based on water depth:

- Restoration of the large/deep water
- Creating a connection where water can flow through Mud Lake
 - Following 4-6 depth water level

Rozumalski: Indicated that these recommendations would call for removing the causeway and facilitating additional dredging in Kingsbury Bay. Stated the recommendation is a broad concept plan based in water movement and habitat restoration, not something with great detail yet.

- iii. MPCA Clarification on Previous Mud Lake Studies – Dan Breneman, Lake Superior Unit Project Manager, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Luokkala: Explained that the MPCA had previous studies of the Mud Lake area which resulted in questions about the history of Mud Lake and their findings. Welcomed Dan Breneman to clarify the questions resulting from the MPCA study.

Breneman: Introduced himself and indicated he is a project lead at this site.

Filby Williams: Thanked Mr. Breneman for attending and clarified that the question being raised is regarding the appropriate interpretation of previous MPCA commissioned studies of Mud Lake and what the findings do or do not imply about MPCA's view of the need for restoration.

Breneman: Stated that in 2012 they worked with a consultant to execute an evaluation of restoration elements for Mud Lake, which resulted in a 2013 report titled, Preliminary Restoration Elements for Mud Lake. Explained that this data review focused on what things would be needed in order to move forward and make recommendations. Stated that one focus was increasing hydrologic connection between the two basins (east and west Mud Lake).

Indicated that in order to determine whether increasing the trestle bridge width could improve flow they recommended a flow and sediment transport modeling study.

Filby Williams: Questioned if the study assumed that the causeway could not be entirely removed.



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Breneman: Indicated that their study assumed the causeway would remain in place.

Filby Williams: Questioned whether proposed hydrodynamic modeling was in response to creating a solution in general, or specifically to determine how much the trestle needed to be extended.

Breneman: Stated that in order to request funds to get expansion of a trestle, they need to document how much of a difference it would make.

Vogtman: Questioned if Mr. Breneman believed there was enough water flow in the area currently, and whether a study would need to be conducted to establish this.

Breneman: Stated that trying to quantify enough is difficult; however, calling it east and west Mud Lake determines there is clearly a division between the two. Explained that without the modeling study he could not predict what the flow is currently. Pointed out that previous vegetation studies have suggested sediment build-ups.

Schmidt: Requested Mr. Rozumalski re-state what he was charged with in designing a concept plan for restoration.

Rozumalski: Stated that he facilitated the group and workshop, later synthesizing the information and eventually designing drawings to capture the workshop results.

- iv. Recreational Amenities and Rail Improvements at Mud Lake/Trail Alignment Updates Near Tate and Lyle, Lisa Luokkala, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division

Luokkala: Stated that they have heard a lot about restoration efforts at this location, however little has been shared about the recreational opportunities in a proposed restored Mud Lake with the removal of the causeway. Highlighted proposed recreational amenities and recommendations in partnership with LSMR and the DNR:

- Boat House Point (on US Steel property) Concept
 - Opportunity for natural-surfac trail loop to the point
 - Panoramic views of the river and estuary
 - Tail of the existing causeway would remain
 - Excursion train could have a run-a-round (proposed)
 - Viewing platform for train excursion
 - Kayak launch
 - Harden shoreline surface to accommodate trail near the water's edge
 - Potential fish docking area (accessible)
 - ADA accessible trail loop
- Slag Point Concept
 - Boat launch opportunities

Luokkala: Explained they have worked through different trail alignment possibilities, noting the Tate and Lyle site where the trail runs parallel to the rail, posing some safety concerns. Stated the



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opportunities here are to: move the rail crossing, connect Riverside Park and neighborhood to trail, create a natural buffer between the active rail and the bike and pedestrian use trail. Indicated there are some slop challenges at this location.

- v. Closing Remarks, Lisa Luokkala, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division

Luokkala: Explained that a Master Plan includes a great deal of information that follows the recommendations of the Greater Minnesota Park and Trail Strategic Planning Guidelines. Indicated they believe the WWFT is regionally significant and should be recognized as such, noting they will provide a formal presentation at next month's meeting which will include their recommendations and cost estimates.

Vogtman: Referenced the proposed amenities slide and requested clarification on the second decision making point about Wire Mill Pond, specifically how the rail and trail would coordinate at the site.

Luokkala: Stated that the MPCA and EPA have determined it an area of concern for the larger St. Louis River remediation plan; however, because the City is the owner of this area and causeway, they would maintain the rail bed and route the trail inland.

Vogtman: Referenced Mr. Rozumalski's PowerPoint slides and requested more information about the wetland fill that was described on both sides of the causeway.

Rozumalski: Indicated the fill is not intentional, rather sediment that's come down the river and settles.

Vogtman: Requested more information about the sediment build, specifically if water was able to pass currently.

Rozumalski: Clarified that the lines represented the causeway.

Vogtman: Discussed the causeway and the current small opening for water flow, questioning if the opening would be increased with the proposed plan.

Rozumalski: Confirmed the scientist's recommended that the entire causeway be removed, with possibility of additional enhancements.

Edmondson: Referenced Ms. Luokkala's presentation slides and requested clarification on the three instances where they had to choose between trail, rail, and river, questioning why the first two they chose in favor of rail, whereas the last one they chose in favor of river.

Luokkala: Explained the third location is the largest area they can remediate, noting the other two opportunities would potentially shut down LSMR's excursion trail, whereas terminating the causeway at Boat House Point would allow the excursion to continue.

Filby Williams: Explained that there is a unique restoration opportunity at Mud Lake and based on



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what they heard from the scientists, they believe this opportunity can only be fully realized with removal of the causeway. Emphasized the importance of access for all in an area where approximately 30% of children are living in poverty. Stated commitment to the railroad, but indicated it is not suited to accomplish that access goal because it only operates a limited amount of time, is not wheel chair accessible presently, and requires admission to operate. Stated that only trail would connect Morgan Park to Gary New Duluth, providing the best and only opportunity to finance the full array of public access improvements to this area. Confirmed equitable access as their goal, with restoration efforts allowing them to leverage dollars to achieve this.

Joel Manns (public): Stated he is a volunteer officer with LSMR. Expressed his concern with tearing out the causeway as it means more than simply cutting out 25% of the route. Explained that cutting the excursion would present a huge barrier to their operation. Further explained that a run-a-round is meant for short distances and is not a viable option. Stated the run-a-round cost would be significant. Indicated that they are not against cleaning up Mud Lake; however, they would like to consider alternatives. Explained they attended stakeholder meetings and removal of the causeway was never expressed. Discussed LSMR's goals for accessibility and converting a car to be wheelchair accessible.

Richard Williams (public): Stated that the train and the trail are tourist assets. Questioned how important it is to fix Mud Lake, and what the result would be without restoration. Indicated that putting the trail in is an inexpensive addition. Stated that tourists won't know about Mud Lake restoration.

Andy Webb (public): Introduced himself and indicated the railroad is a niche player in the tourism industry, noting that 28% of those that ride are local with the rest coming from elsewhere. Explained that trail and rail would complement each other, and stated they are opposed to shortening the trip. Questioned why the City would invest in a run-a-round at Mud Lake when existing infrastructure exists. Questioned if the environmental cleanup needs to be 100%.

Dave Moore (public): Introduced himself and stated he is a registered engineer with 40 years of railway engineering and maintenance experience. Referenced Mr. Filby Williams discussion of equitable access and stated LSMR has a voucher program where they work with partners to distribute free vouchers for those who cannot afford tickets for the train. Stated that options to remediate with the causeway in place were not presented. Proposed Boy Scout Landing be developed into a destination. Encouraged building the railroad up instead of tearing it down to provide year round attraction to West Duluth.

Richard Haney (public): Introduced himself and stated his experience teaching environmental education at UMD. Explained he is happy about the restoration of the area and the River, noting he attended the two meetings last week with Barr Engineering. Stated there was a great deal of confusion regarding the concept and studies regarding removal of parts or all of the causeway. Indicated that from an environmental perspective, removing the causeway would be the best option; however, any future development of the area would need to be held to this same standard. Indicated he believes there are alternate ways to open it and accomplish flow. Explained that removing the causeway is removing a very significant portion of the rail.



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Mike Casey (public): Stated the presentation was excellent. Explained they offered a free train ride the other week. Encouraged others ride the train and observe not only the scenery but the people. Noted the presenter on disability and indicated trail will not be able to be used by all. Explained that many of those riding the train will not use the trail. Commented on the scientist workshop and their dreams for full restoration at Mud Lake. Suggested there be a separation of the terms restoration and clean-up, as clean-up could take place with the causeway intact. Questioned where the economic and social plan is and stated the train will eventually be eliminated if it is not viable.

Breeuwer: Requested that Ms. Luokkala make sure the plan includes cost factors for the creation of the run-a-round track.

Luokkala: Confirmed it will be part of the budget presentation.

Breeuwer: Referenced comments by Mr. Filby Williams and Mr. Rozumalski and stated that the instructions for the workshop read, "to develop a science-based plan", questioned whether that was true or a misrepresentation of what was requested.

Filby Williams: Explained that he would have to review the contract agreement for review the specific language; however, he was clear in stating that if the scientists saw a way to accomplish the restoration while maintaining any form of the causeway, they would defer to that opinion.

Rozumalski: Stated that in the workshop they discussed presenting two plans; however, decided upon moving forward with one recommendation.

Luokkala: Indicated that the workshop group defined their own goals to accomplish a restoration plan and were not led by pre-defined goals.

Johnston (ISD 709 Liaison): Requested a copy of the complete study for review, including definitions, credentials, and documentation.

Luokkala: Requested clarification on which study Mr. Johnson was referring to.

Johnston (ISD 709 Liaison): Confirmed he was referring to the scientist workshop.

Filby Williams: Stated the conceptual design format they were following has been utilized in many other estuary remediation projects, and is by definition a process of bringing together authorities of the issue and asking them to put to work all their knowledge about how rivers and the estuary behave. Indicated the design process is a science based preliminary plan that leads to further, more detailed engineering and design studies.

Luokkala: Clarified that Mini-Master Plans do not typically provide in-depth research, rather recommendations which may include conducting additional research. Indicated what the Commission has before them is the extent of their data.

Edmondson: Questioned if the plan includes the run-a-round in the budget.



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Luukkala: Confirmed yes.

Schmidt: Questioned if they know whether the run-a-round is possible in the proposed area.

Luukkala: Stated they have visited the site and worked with consultants to determine what is viable and they do believe it is possible. Clarified they do not conduct engineering studies in a Mini Master Plan study.

Vogtman: Stated that management at Grand Avenue Estates was not aware the WWFT was being built there. Questioned Mr. Rozumalski and whether Mud Lake could be cleaned-up with the causeway intact.

Rozumalski: Indicated that is not his expertise.

Vogtman: Questioned who would pay for the long-term repairs of the causeway if it stays in place.

Filby Williams: Confirmed it is a responsibility of LSMR, noting how extraordinary of a job they have done, however their long term ability to maintain the rail is unknown. Accepted that the plan poses many risks for LSMR and stated they are working to mitigate the problem.

Vogtman: Requested hearing an update from LSMR on the current condition of the rail and whether they've considered alternate runs to makeup the potential loss at Mud Lake.

Vogtman: Questioned if dollar figures regarding each scenario would be provided.

Luukkala: Stated they have been including numbers with the initial analysis, whether it was rail to trail conversion, rail with trail, or removal of the causeway. Indicated they've had to look creatively at the partnerships and resources available with the restoration of Mud Lake and cleanup funding opportunities to have a rail and trail option. Stated that if they were to keep the causeway, it would increase the cost exponentially.

Vogtman: Suggested LSMR partner with the Zoo.

Filby Williams: Asked Commissioners to consider who from the public was underrepresented during this discussion. Stated those that are underrepresented are those of modest means that represent the sizable majority of the two neighborhoods in discussion. Explained that City Staff and Commissioners have the difficult task of responding for those unheard community members.

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, October 19 at noon in the Parks office

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

C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Tjaard Breeuwer – Tiersa Wodash, Britt Rohrbaugh, Dudley Edmondson, Dean Vogtman,



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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

IX. Division Manager's Report

Filby Williams: Announced that Will Roche, the new Parks Manager, will begin on Tuesday November 14th.

X. Public Comment

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 pm. Moved by Commissioner Breeuwer Second by Commissioner Edmondson.

XII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday November 8, 2017 at 5pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall.