



# PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of November 8, 2017

City Hall – Council Chambers  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



## I. Call Meeting to Order

President Schmidt called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

## II. Roll Call

Present: John Schmidt, Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby, Tjaard Breeuwer, Dennis Isernhagen, Britt Rohrbaugh, Tiersa Wodash, Dean Vogt man, Michael Schraepfer, Kristin Bergerson

Not present: Dudley Edmondson, Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison), Frank Jewell (St. Louis County Board Liaison), Art Johnston (ISD 709 School Board Liaison)

## III. Approval of October 11 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Isernhagen motioned for approval of the October 11, 2017 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Breeuwer. Unanimously approved.

Schmidt: Recited the vision statement of the Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission and highlighted key components of the Duluth Parks and Recreation Master Plan's fifth guiding principle, to connect the community. Indicated that the Parks Commission is committed to a respectful and open public process. Requested that members of the public speak for a time period not to exceed three minutes, forwarding further requests for information to Parks Commissioners or City Staff. Recited quote from Christa Schultz.

## IV. Presentations

- A. Spirit Mountain Master Plan Public Hearing – John Kelley, Planner II, City of Duluth Community Planning Division (informational – for December action)

Kelley: Informed Commission that the Spirit Mountain Master Plan is being presented to them in accordance with the Spirit Mountain Recreation Authorities legislation that states the City Council, upon recommendation by the Planning and Parks Commission, shall receive and approve a Master Plan or changes to the plan prior to construction of any building or facility. Recited mission of the Spirit Mountain Recreation Authority and noted its objectives:

- Development of a wide range of recreational facilities available to both local residents and tourists
- Aid economy of northeastern Minnesota by encouraging private enterprise efforts in conjunction with the recreational facilities
- Preservation of the environment in the area by a timely and intelligent plan of development

Kelley: Noted the facilities that have been constructed since the 2008 Spirit Mountain Mater Plan:

- Grand Avenue Chalet at lower base
- Replacement of Spirit Express with a detachable quad chairlift
- Snow Tubing Center

- New snowmaking system
- Spirit Mountain Adventure Park (Timber Flyer Zip Lines, Timber Twister Alpine Coaster, Mini Golf, Disc Golf, Jumping Pillow)
- Spirit Mountain Bike Park (includes trails for downhill and cross-country riders and winter fat tire biking)

Kelley: Described the main reasons for the 2017 Master Plan update:

- Update the existing facility maps to include the additions constructed since 2008
- Assemble the various trail proposals and evaluate their feasibility with ongoing ski and summer operations at Spirit Mountain
- Document the industry trends of the alpine skiing and snowboarding market in the Midwest region
- Compare Spirit Mountain's operation to industry averages within the region
- Explore private sector development supportive to recreational operations

Kelly: Referred to mountain facilities winter map, and explained a large part of the planning process was to document existing facilities. Displayed map of the summer existing facilities, noting the trail system construction. Described SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis they conducted and noted one of the major weaknesses was deferred maintenance of the day lodge. Stated the plans eight core elements:

- Renew Alpine Ski/Snowboard Facility
  - Implement a lift ticket scanning and card access system to measure use of facilities
  - Create a capital replacement program for lifts
  - Replace Gandy Dancer with a new fixed-grip quad chairlift when deemed necessary
  - Ongoing investment in snowmaking and grooming equipment to provide a quality snow experience
- Improve Parking, Signage and Arrival Experience
  - Conduct parking lot counts at mid-day on peak holidays to compare with daily visitor data for each activity
  - Schedule an inbound parking lot vehicle occupancy count for busy holiday weekend
  - Estimate peak visitor and employee numbers for each activity to estimate maximum parking demand
  - Review the opportunities for signage on I-35 and approach roads
- Enhance Nordic Skiing with Grand Avenue Nordic Center
  - Cooperate with DXC to integrate the cross-country user group into the facility
  - Develop an equitable framework for cost sharing the anticipated upgrades to the parking lot, snow clearing, snowmaking, and the use of space within the Chalet by the new user group
  - Coordinate with DXC to identify locations sustainable for waxing sheds on the areas south of the parking lot that don't interfere with access to the ski runs
  - Other winter recreation idea includes: consider identifying a snowshoe loop trail, increase snow play offerings at Tubing Center, consider creating snowmobile access trail
- Grow Year Round Use
  - Spirit Mountain Adventure Park – install new recreation facilities



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- Spirit Mountain Bike Park – build and maintain new and existing trails, budget for maintenance of trails, rental fleet of bikes and accessories, host mountain bike events, work with COGGS and other groups
- Campground – renovate existing buildings, add additional campsites if warranted, consider adding yurts or other tent like structures, evaluate financial feasibility of RV Park
- Grand Avenue Base – increase parking supply, adjust hours of operation for Chalet based on user needs, build free outdoor playground for year round use, consider hosting events such as farmers market, concerts, outdoor movies; coordinate with Tallas Island Paddles Center for programming/camps
- Regional Trail Connectivity and Trailhead
  - Provide trailhead signage at both the upper and lower base areas including large scale maps
  - Explore winter and summer programming options that take advantage of the proposed connection to the Lake Superior Zoo
  - Ensure pedestrian connections between the Grand Avenue base and the St. Louis River
- Repair, Renovate and Renew Existing Buildings
  - Day Lodge/Main Chalet – address immediate deficiencies with building, develop a plan for phased renewal of the building and identify potential funding sources for improvements, consider expansion of main chalet during renovations
  - Maintenance Facility – consider new locations for maintenance shop
  - Potential indoor training facility – for a wide range of training and recreational features
- Forested Land Management & Sustainable Green Development
  - Devise a management plan for the undeveloped, forested area of the Spirit Mountain property, which will focus on maintenance and enhancement of ecological values and functions, and the protection of cultural sites
- Development Opportunities Adjacent/Within Spirit Mountain
  - The City and Spirit Mountain Board should work with adjacent developers to ensure optimal integration of vehicles and pedestrian access, trail connectivity and recreational amenity spaces
  - Support building out infrastructure in partnership with citizen organizations and/or private development at the base of Spirit Mountain

Kelley: Noted the addition of the Land Use Code for the site, and explained that Spirit Mountain is exempt from City zoning; therefore, if there are to be land use regulations, the Master Plan serves as that document.

Breeuwer: Referred to the summer map and indicated that it speaks of a proposed skills area, and indicated that it is 70% constructed already. Questioned what the boundary area would be in regards to base development.

Kelley: Stated there was initially four development scenarios, with the one in question focusing on the Lower Chalet area. Indicated that the proposal did not consider development of the upper area, other than expansion of the existing Mountain Villas or addition to the existing chalet. Stated that in terms of adjacent development, there was consideration of looking at the south side of Grand.



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Wodash: Questioned what the process is for Duluth should one of the proposed elements move forward or be built.

Kelley: Stated that after approval from City Council based on the recommendations of the Planning and Parks Commission, any necessary permits for construction or activity would need to be obtained from the City.

Schmidt: Questioned how the Spirit Mountain Authority prioritizes their decisions and what process they use to determine their ranking.

Kelley: Indicated that many of the activities would require a market analysis before any work could be done. Stated there is no real priority from the Spirit Mountain Authority Board, other than to fix current infrastructure.

Vogtman: Expressed appreciation of presentation and vision for the Lower Chalet. Stated that the playground is a great idea. Questioned how they would address safe crossing for tourists and community members over Highway 23.

Jim Filby Williams (Director of Public Administration, City of Duluth): Confirmed a signal is already budgeted for this intersection.

Isernhagen: Applauded the Authority on their vision for a multi-use facility, but questioned the budget and whether it would become a profitable organization with this plan.

Kelley: Stated that from the City's standpoint, they cannot speak to that, however a years' worth of financials were reviewed by the City.

Adam Fulton (Manger of Planning Division, City of Duluth): Stated that they worked closely with Spirit Mountain to ensure they have vibrant finances. Indicated they are impressed with their managements work, noting this plan sets them up for new activities, but also calls for tracking of the activity.

Kelley: Added that during the planning process, their consultant researched transit ski and snowboard activities, noting a slow-down in the skiing industry in North America as a whole.

Isernhagen: Questioned if a marketing plan was developed.

Brandy Ream (Executive Director, Spirit Mountain Recreation Area): Thanked the City for being the driving force in updating the Master Plan, and restated that the document is not a financial plan, instead the goal of the plan was getting their maps and trail systems updated. Noted the success of Spirit Mountain coming off two back to back worst winters in the Midwest area. Indicated this season is off to a good start, and they are seeing growth in the mountain biking area, with small incremental growth of the adventure area. Stated they are looking at growth of the Lower Chalet and are hopeful it can be open seven days' a week year round. Confirmed a marketing plan was not addressed in the Master Plan update, however, they work with their own consultants on marketing for



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each season.

Wodash: Questioned if usage data would be collected continuously to inform future decision making.

Ream: Confirmed yes, and indicated the implementation of season pass scanning will allow them to track growth and true usage from their memberships. Stated that moving forward with plans will depend on finances and priorities, noting aging infrastructure as a large priority. Indicated their wedding events have increased with both 2018 and 2019 almost booked.

Wodash: Questioned if individual projects will include maintenance costs when proposed.

Ream: Confirmed yes, and indicated that it would run through the formal City process.

Wodash: Complimented the many great ideas proposed and requested that in the future documents and maps be presented in a legible format so Commissioners can read them.

Torch: Questioned what Spirit Mountain saw as a long term strategy for managing and maintaining the Upper Nordic Trails.

Ream: Indicated that part of the Nordic System, as stated in the Master Plan, would be to address connectivity between the top and bottom trails. Stated they will continue their partnership with Duluth Cross Country Ski Club and will not extinguish the upper trails.

Torch: Stated that he is used to seeing Master Plans that highlight development and maintenance costs, and questioned what the future steps in parsing out the sections will be.

Ream: Confirmed they began this planning process over a year and a half ago with City Engineering to determine estimates of certain components, which they will continue to update on a yearly basis until they reach the point of implementation.

Torch: Questioned the potential redevelopment of Norton Creek Boulevard for car traffic, and stated that from his experience biking this section, it seems like a large idea with questionable feasibility.

Kelley: Confirmed that the Master Plan did discuss connecting the upper and lower base areas for circulation purposes, and Norton Creek Boulevard would take substantial amounts of money to improve and meet City standards. Stated that no further studies on this area were conducted.

Fulton: Stated that based on preliminary analysis, the cost to convert the boulevard to a public street would be expensive, however there may be possibility to build something that isn't necessarily a public road.

Schmidt: Noted his appreciation for the attention to make Spirit Mountain an all-season facility use. Expressed concern regarding climate change and questioned if it had been incorporated into the planning process.



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Ream: Confirmed that it has been a concern; however, what they have seen with the last two winters being unfavorable, is that people still want to use the facilities. Indicated they are continually looking at what operations they can change or adjust in order to offer their guests and pass holders maximum use while keeping costs lower. Stated they are looking into weather proof opportunities such as wedding and banquets.

Schmidt: Stated that although this Master Plan process is different, one area of focus for the Parks Commission is what they are doing to serve their underserved population.

Ream: Confirmed that Spirit Mountain has a variety of programs to serve the underserved, noting the arrangements they've made with many school programs to offer entry at a nominal fee. Stated they also work with the Northland Children Services and Mentor Duluth programs, while also offering scholarships.

Breeuwer: Stated that the Parks Commission is used to seeing a Master Plan that addresses this and questioned if it was included.

Fulton: Requested that the Parks Commission remember this is not like the Mini-Master Plan's they are used to reviewing, rather a Master Plan called out in state statute. Indicated that the plan fits with the Imagine Duluth 2015 Plan.

Breeuwer: Questioned whether disc golf will be included in the plan.

Ream: Indicated that disc golf continues to grow and they are incorporating it into summer camp programming.

Schmidt: Questioned if food and beverage has leveled off, and whether opportunities for growth exists.

Ream: Stated that over the past three winters they have focused on streamlining menus and portions. Indicated that they are looking at expanding menu options, but recognize the importance of financial accountability and sustainability.

Denette Lynch (public): Questioned if the Master Plan would be available online for public comment or input.

Fulton: Confirmed the Master Plan is available online under Community Planning, and comments can be directed to himself or Parks Staff.

Denette Lynch (public): Stated that the Master Plan refers to a disc golf course that already exists and to the Tallas Island Paddle Center, which is not consistent with the Western Waterfront Trail Plan.

- B. Park Maintenance Project Completion Review – Dale Sellner, Buildings and Ground Supervisor, City of Duluth (informational)

Sellner: Introduced himself as Parks and Grounds Supervisor for Park Maintenance and expressed appreciation for the Commissions service, commitment and partnership. Highlighted major 2017 accomplishments in Park Maintenance:

- Field Maintenance
  - New dugout at Merritt Park – previously only one dugout
  - New Soccer field at Gary New Duluth Park – drainage and irrigation included
  - Drain tile installed at Jean Duluth Soccer field – started this process 12-14 years ago as drainage did not exist, becomes a problem during rain
  - New batters cage at Wade Stadium
- Tree Maintenance
  - Part time City Forester hired - working on EAB process/ planning and grant monitoring
  - Planted 184 trees on 4<sup>th</sup> street
  - Planted 15 trees in Chambers Grove
  - Removed 85 EAB trees – 100 more removals still anticipated in 2017
  - Injected 177 ash trees to protect from EAB – Woodland, Congdon and Lakeside neighborhoods
  - Completed Skyline view shed at 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue East and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue West
  - Continued work on the 2016 wind storm
- Trail Maintenance
  - Installed culvert on Lower Lincoln Park Hiking Trail
  - Re-routed Park Point Hiking Trail to avoid sensitive natural areas
  - Mitigated wet areas on Grand Avenue section of the Duluth Traverse
  - Built Lincoln Park Connector trail
  - Built new trails at Quarry Park
  - Seal coated trail at Bayfront Park
  - Re-aligned dock at Indian Point Campground
- Recycling Efforts
  - Installed new system for trash and recycling at Enger, Chambers Grove and Lester Park
  - Distributed 60 recycling containers citywide with the receipt of a Dr. Pepper/Snapple grant
  - Secured GreenCorps member to work on recycling and waste reduction
- Chambers Grove Park
  - Picnic pavilion repainted and stained by contractor
  - New lighting and installed in pavilion
  - Stone chimney tuck pointed and cleaned
  - 20 new picnic tables in pavilion –sturdier material
- Fond du Lac Park
  - Permanent orchard fence installed with volunteers
  - Liaison with volunteers for mulching of orchards
- Playground improvements
  - 30 yards of wood fiber added to playground at Good Fellowship Community Club
  - Replaced rubber crumbles in playground fall-zone with engineered wood fiber at Harrison Park
  - Volunteer project to raise edging and add more sand to existing playground fall zone at Washington Square



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- Painting Projects
  - Chester Bowl – gates and park entrance
  - Midtown Park – wooden walls and park structures
  - Park Point – entrance gate to picnic pavilion
  - Longview Tennis – new railings and trim for the patio area of tennis court
  - Ongoing graffiti removal
- Fairmount Park
  - New concrete installed around restroom facility to make it ADA compliant
- Enger park
  - Landscaped the area around the new wedding pavilion
  - Added to pathway to the pavilion – will continue work in stages
- Twin Ponds
  - Planting of shrubs on lower pond – helps to revert pond back to a wild waterway (improved trout fishing area)
- Bayfront and Railroad Street
  - Replacement of numerous trees lost in the 2016 storm in Bayfront Park
  - Revitalized green space corridor after devastation of 2016 storm along Railroad Street.
- Lake Place Park
  - Revitalized green space through removal of overgrown shrubs and replacement with perennials and properly placed shrubs
- Rose Garden
  - Re-set circle one pavers due to settling over the years
  - Replaced landscaping at western entrance
- Chester Park
  - Replaced wooden decking on overlook at 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue East
- Lakewalk
  - Repainted 30+ light poles to match newly installed LED light fixtures
  - Working on October damage to Lakewalk – current asphalt path cleared and boardwalk sections hauled to tree farm

Wodash: Referenced improvements to Midtown Park and questioned if it was State property.

Sellner: Confirmed the City does not own the space but still maintains it.

Wodash: Questioned what changes can or cannot be made to this area, specifically in regards to the lighting.

Sellner: Stated that MN DOT would be responsible for lighting, but he will look into specifics on the maintenance.

Torch: Expressed gratitude to Mr. Sellner and staff. Offered sympathy for not making it through 2017 without an extreme weather event.

Sellner: Thanked Parks Staff and his employees for their hard work.





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C. 2018 Parks Fund Budget Process – Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration, City of Duluth (informational)

Filby Williams: Talked briefly about the annual budget process for Parks and stated that although the Parks Commission does not approve expenditures or budgets, it is relevant to parks and recreation activities. Discussed the core budgets for Parks and Recreation operations:

- \$3.4 million Park Maintenance budget
  - Primarily from the general fund
- \$2.8 million dedicated Parks Fund paid for by the voter approved levy
  - Not part of the general fund

Filby Williams: Stated that 2018 will be a challenging year for both budgets, noting that the parks fund has both a strength and weakness in that the Parks Levy is static. Indicated that although it is not subject to cuts from the General Fund, it does not rise with changes or gradual increases in personnel wages. Indicated that Park Maintenance will lose two full-time personnel and see a substantial cut in their contract services budget because of City budget cuts.

Wodash: Questioned how the Commission could support the discussion of increasing the levy looking into the future.

Filby Williams: Stated that annual losses hit the City hard this year; however, they are determined to work together in 2018 to improve the long term health of the Parks Fund. Indicated he will report back to the Commission after further discussion.

Breeuwer: Stated that as effective purchasing power goes down, fewer staff is not an option so getting rid of properties might need to be considered. Questioned if a facilities inventory study could be used to decide which should be maintained into the future.

Filby Williams: Indicated he did talk to Administration about funding this study, and their direction for 2018 was that rather than developing a new plan, implementation of the call for facility consolidation as described in the existing 2010 Master Plan should be considered. Stated that there are a number of buildings identified for demolition in that plan, and they will be looking at how to move forward with those.

Schmidt: Questioned if Mr. Filby Williams anticipates these being addressed one at a time or as a City-wide decision.

Filby Williams: Stated that the 2010 Master Plan did identify individual facilities.

Schmidt: Questioned if a blueprint for action is in the plan

Filby Williams: Confirmed yes.

D. Lower Chester Mini-Master Plan (informational - for December action)

- i. Opening Remarks – Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration, City of Duluth
- ii. Mini Master Plan Presentation - Jim Shoberg, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth Parks

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and Recreation Division

Filby Williams: Stated that their aim at Lower Chester Park is to accomplish two important goals:

- Expand and improve the use of the park for non-hockey activities year round
- Preserve the park as a viable base for organized youth hockey

Filby Williams: Indicated that in this small space they are presented with a difficult design and planning process. Stated hope that from the conversations they've had since the last Commission meeting with Neighbors of Lower Chester and Congdon Hockey will be evident in the proposed plan. Confirmed the plan is not entirely complete, and they will continue conversation in the month ahead as they further develop and refine plan concepts. Expressed gratitude for the engagement, thoughtfulness, patience and passion from community volunteers from both groups.

Shoberg: Introduced himself and indicated that as requested, an update to the Lower Chester Mini-Master Plan will be provided. Noted the 18 public meetings they've had to date and highlighted major dates:

- Public meeting #1 - September 14<sup>th</sup>
- Online survey open for comment (September 20<sup>th</sup> to October 11<sup>th</sup>)
- Public meeting #2 - Parks Commission update (October 11<sup>th</sup>)
- Public meeting #3 - Parks Commission update (November 8<sup>th</sup>)
- Online survey open for comment (November 15<sup>th</sup> to November 29<sup>th</sup>)
- Public meeting #4 – present final plan to Parks Commission (December 13<sup>th</sup>)
- Public meeting #5 – present final plan to Council for approval (December)

Shoberg: Indicated the plan was broken into a winter and summer concept, with an intermittent fix for the upcoming winter season that allows for hockey to continue. Highlighted key components of the long term winter plan they are working on:

- Rotates a 2<sup>nd</sup> rink existing hockey rink 90 degrees
- Puts in a players box up against the wood line
  - During summer would serve as storage area
- Currently the flat open space is not big enough to accommodate a rink of this size
  - Conservatively can get a 157'x65'
- Retaining wall up against 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue East
- Add footpath near rinks
- Open free skating area
- Winter open space extension of play area
- Exiting players box on lower rinks to be converted to storage

Shoberg: Highlighted key components of the summer concept:

- Rotate the 2<sup>nd</sup> rink perpendicular to the 1<sup>st</sup> rink
  - Allows boards on backside and side of rink to remain year round
  - Reduces maintenance burden
  - Allows for larger open turf green space during summer
- Proposed playground will be directly adjacent to green space
- Player's box for storage



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Shoberg: Stated they reviewed survey results from 333 respondents on fourteen different questions and found that the park is truly a neighborhood park as determined by the respondent's zip codes. Highlighted other survey questions and results:

- How often do you use the park – 55812 and 55805 zip codes more frequently used daily
- How would you use the park in the winter – open skate was top response for both groups
- How would you use the park in the summer- nature usage and birding were top responses for 55812 and 55805, top response from other zip codes was box lacrosse
- Do you visit the park alone or with others – majority with others
- Priorities for winter usage – local zip codes listed hockey and open skate and other zip codes stated organized hockey then open skate
- Summer use priorities – local zip codes ranked grass, open trail head and a trail head to the creek, with other zip codes ranking skating on the sport court, green space usage and trail head to the creek

Shoberg: Stated that surveys like this are just one of the ways they collect data, and although they are imperfect, they allow staff to capture certain data that does not come up in public or stakeholder meetings. Restated important dates and mentioned the open comment period that will take place beginning November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Breeuwer: Referenced the aerial photograph of the plan and questioned if the new rink would need to be excavated with a new retaining wall.

Shoberg: Confirmed it will need to be fenced, and a retaining wall and guard rail at the street would be installed. Indicated they will need to relocate one of the light poles and shift it over to the side for safe lighting during the winter.

Breeuwer: Questioned if they've looked at cost for this.

Shoberg: Stated they are currently looking at cost and will include this breakdown at the next presentation.

Breeuwer: Questioned if Lacrosse would use the rink in November before the start of the hockey season.

Shoberg: Confirmed yes if weather permits.

Wodash: Referenced the budget and questioned what funding avenues would be used.

Shoberg: Indicated they will work with the two primary stakeholder groups, as they will be responsible for part of the costs. Stated that this is being negotiated and they hope to have this laid out at the next meeting.

Wodash: Questioned if long term maintenance would be included.



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Shoberg: Confirmed yes and indicated it will also include who is responsible for certain aspects, noting the importance of user agreements in these situations.

Wodash: Questioned if the rinks will be signed so visitors know what they can and cannot do on the rinks during the summer.

Shoberg: Explained that the Parks website has a parks listing page that allows users to search parks by amenity; however, they hope for upgraded signs and kiosks at all park locations in the future.

Wodash: Questioned if open skating would be allowed if organized hockey was not using the rink.

Shoberg: Stated that two rinks would not be available for open skate, however ice time and open skate will be posted on the building for visitors.

Vogtman: Referred to the proposed 21 spaces of parking and questioned what a hammerhead turnaround is.

Shoberg: Stated that the survey results determined parking as an issue, and they are working to address it along East 5<sup>th</sup> Street and along 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue East, which may have potential for parallel or perpendicular parking opportunities.

Vogtman: Referred to summer plan and questioned if open turf meant grass.

Shoberg: Confirmed yes, and stated that in addition to adding a drain field, they will redo the soils to promote healthy grass growth.

Rohrbaugh: Questioned how hard the hockey association has been looking at alternatives as the cost to build a retaining wall seems large for a small park that doesn't seem well suited for a growing hockey league.

Shoberg: Indicated that the largest cost will be the drainage system and grating, which will need to happen whether hockey is there or not. Confirmed that the expense that allows hockey programming will be put on the hockey association. Stated that they will reach out to the neighborhood group for matching funds in regards to the proposed playground. Confirmed that they understand the physical limitations of the park space and realize that further expansion of the hockey program is not possible through additional rink space beyond what is proposed in this Mini-Master Plan.

Isernhagen: Expressed concern with traffic in the area and questioned what the maximum occupancy is with two rinks, and whether this is the first season they will operate with the two rinks.

Shoberg: Confirmed there has been two rinks for many years, noting hockey's presence at this location for almost 100 years. Stated that they've heard from the community that hockey programming is important and the City feels they can balance this with other wants like summer green space.



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Isernhagen: Questioned what the existing building in the corner of the property will accommodate, and what the short and long term plan for it are.

Shoberg: Stated the building will stay where it is and won't be torn down until necessary, noting however that it is in fact sinking and may have to be removed in the future if something significant happens.

Isernhagen: Discussed the recent three-year agreement approved between Duluth Area Hockey Association (DAHA) and the City and questioned if it includes the proposed rink.

Shoberg: Confirmed the agreement was approved and included rink use for the 2017/18 season; however, approval of the Mini-Master Plan would dictate future use.

Bergerson: Questioned if the small rink would be similar or larger in size to the one Congdon School had before it was removed.

Shoberg: Indicated he would have to look up the size that was at Congdon School. Stated that they looked at all the outdoor hockey facilities across town and compared sizes, noting the proposed rink at Lower Chester is equivalent or smaller than those at other locations in town.

Bergerson: Referred to comments from Commissioner Rohrbaugh and questioned what happened to the Lester Park hockey team and facility.

Shoberg: Indicated he could not speak to what happened there, however the boards no longer exist at the location.

Breeuwer: Questioned if they had any physical parking management strategies with this plan.

Shoberg: Stated that any modifications to the streets are something they will have to be carefully funded. Further explained that signage could make an immediate impact and better define alternate parking. Confirmed they are currently working with Engineering.

Breeuwer: Encouraged a user agreement that defines behavior and suggests carpooling for the hockey association members.

Shoberg: Stated that preferred parking locations could be developed while encouraging carpooling.

Vogtman: Questioned when the plan will go to City Council.

Filby Williams: Stated that Mr. Shoberg has been working hard on the design, while himself and Hank Martinsen have been working with hockey and non-hockey groups to determine which park uses are valuable and positive for the community. Indicated they've looked for alternative locations for Congdon hockey, however Lower Chester makes the most geographic and financial sense. Expressed confidence in accomplishing their goals without creating polarity amongst user groups.



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Wendy Saliin (public): Thanked Commissioners for their thoughtful questions and considerations. Stated that Neighbors of Lower Chester Park (NOLCP) received the plan's details at the end of last week, which did not give them sufficient time for discussion as an organization. Stated that the plan does not adequately address parking and noted a projected 85 families will be in the hockey program. Indicated that parking needs to be a priority as it is a safety issue with Lower Chester not having any designated parking. Stated that the proposed rink size seems to be what's driving the size of hockey programming, however the current size may already be too large for the small park space. Requested that the public be further engaged as many do not have internet access to provide input. Indicated that an additional month delay for the Parks Commission vote seems reasonable.

Jason Wall (public): Thanked Commissioners and Mr. Filby Williams. Expressed concern that a great deal of time and energy has been put towards how to create an environment for youth hockey to sustain and grow its programming, however this is a secondary concern for the neighborhood. Stated that NOLCP has a vision that aligns with the City's Master Plan to improve the quality of existing parks and trail system, provide community connection through trails and bikeways and have fewer but higher quality buildings. Indicated their goal is bigger than arriving at two rinks and a playground, rather providing a four-season park while contributing to a healthy community.

Lynden Medlin (public): Introduced himself as Rink Director with Congdon Park Hockey and stated that the program has seen substantial growth because the Lower Chester program folded in 2010, resulting in substantial growth to Congdon Park Hockey. Stated that the rink size that has been there the previous few seasons was dictated by the neighborhood group and was not large enough to sustain the hockey programming. Confirmed they have 71 families; however, all families are not at the rink at the same time. Stated that 20-30 families may be there at the same time. Requested a copy of the DAHA agreement with the City be shared with everyone as it states the rinks are open 24/7, and outside of programming nightly from 5-8pm. Stated that DAHA does maintain the rink and typically flood and maintain the rink after 8pm.

Wodash: Questioned if during off-hours the rinks are open to the public.

Lynden Medlin (public): Confirmed that the DAHA agreements with the City state the rinks are open for public use when not being utilized for hockey programming.

Isernhagen: Questioned if it would be possible to postpone voting on the Mini-Master Plan until after the current hockey season. Stated that looking into alternative locations should still be considered.

Shoberg: Stated that pushing the vote out an additional plan is possible, and they can present a parking plan at the December meeting. Indicated they would like to stick to their original timeline as they have been working on this for over a year..

Isernhagen: Stated that before a permanent plan was established he would like to engage the neighbors of that area.

Shoberg: Confirmed they have undergone an extensive process and will include that at the next presentation.



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Vogtman: Asked Mr. Medlin whether they have thought about families carpooling.

Medlin: Confirmed yes and re-affirmed that all families do not practice at the same time, noting Lacrosse uses the facility every Sunday, but little is brought up about their numbers.

Jim Filby Williams: Clarified they are considering a modestly larger second rink next year because neighborhood residents and hockey folks expressed concern regarding how late children and parents are at the site in the evening. Indicated that by establishing a second rink that is just large enough to allow simultaneous practice, they can get families home and out of the neighborhood earlier. Confirmed the City will be bringing significant parking concepts to next month's meeting. Confirmed City's responsibility to make sure rules and the DAHA agreement are enforced. Stated that with 129 parks and only two Parks Planners, finding a solution and moving forward in the predictable future is important.

Patty Sobczak (public): Thanked Commissioners and City Staff for listening to their concerns. Stated that the current plan leaves many unanswered questions. Questioned the parks ability to sustain a hockey program with 85 families and inadequate parking. Confirmed NOLCP has not had time to formally vote on the plan. Questioned what would happen to their park should the board choose not to support the plan, being they would still like to provide matching funds for the playground.

Cheryl Skafte (Provisional Assistant Manager, Parks and Recreation): Shared that a public computer station is available at the Parks Office at City Hall for online surveys. Stated they will also mail out hard copy surveys if requested.

Shoberg: Stated that they will request action in January instead of December.

Schmidt: Thanked everyone for their patience during the planning process and stated that this will be a good model for others.

- E. Western Waterfront Park and Trail Mini-Master Plan – Lisa Luokkala, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division, and Heidi Bringman, Landscape Architect & Wetland Specialist, LHB Inc. (informational – for December action)

Luokkala: Introduced herself and LHB Inc. consultant Heidi Bringman, and indicated they have worked over the last 15 months to conduct the planning process for the Western Waterfront Park and Trail Mini-Master Plan. Stated that when they begin a planning process, they are often unsure what it will reveal, and the City has to ask big questions and then seek answers. Acknowledged the large amount of content that will be shared, and stated the plan mirrors the balance and compromise necessary for a rail and trail option. Indicated that as part of the larger suite of 26 projects that make up the St. Louis River Corridor Initiative, the Western Waterfront Park and Trail and its recommended extension play a critical role in creating connectivity for existing residential neighborhoods who have been historically cut off from one another and the river. Further stated that it plays a critical role in connecting recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors, while threading together unique destinations and everyday opportunities that residents have never been able to experience. Indicated the trail would allow a child to ride their bike from the Riverside neighborhood to a softball

practice at Blackmer Park, or a resident in the Fond du Lac neighborhood the opportunity to bike or walk to the Gary New Duluth neighborhood without going on the highway. Stated that this plan represents both trail connectivity and equitable access for all. Confirmed the City has proceeded with a rail and trail option after much deliberation over public input and cost estimating. Indicated that after going over the draft plan, she will request from the Commission whether they wish to stick to the current timeline and vote on the plan in December, or push the vote to January, allowing time to gather additional information.

Bringman: Thanked Commissioners and expressed her excitement. Indicated she will walk through the draft plan, noting it should not be considered a final plan as there are a few pending items they are gathering information on. Highlighted the chapters of the plan:

- **Introduction & Overview**

- Vision of this project started in 1979 when City created a plan to have a recreational trail along the western shoreline of the St. Louis River
- Currently only 3.3 miles of this trail exists – envisioned to be 9 miles
- The shoreline was previously inaccessible due to industrial/commercial sites and unique topography (wetland shorelines and steep slopes)
- Since 1979, City heard continued wants from community groups for accessibility to the river
- Summer of 2016 - planning process started
- Green space is lacking in the western Duluth corridor
  - Study public access to the water and within neighborhoods
- Other plan alignments
  - Other St. Louis River Corridor projects going on along the trail which complement this plan
- City anticipates going for Legacy Funding for this project and categorizing it as a Regionally Significant Plan
  - Would provide additional funding support
  - Regionally important because the longevity of its existence, ability to connect seven neighborhoods in western Duluth
  - St. Louis Estuary largest fresh water estuary in the US
  - Enhances recreational opportunities and connectivity

- **Existing Conditions & Site Analysis**

- Site history – extensive and dates back to the pre 1600s
- Speaks to the City's larger vision of having a system connecting entire greater Duluth area
  - Jay Cooke State Park through Brighton Beach
- Physical conditions of current terrain – steep slopes, set back shorelines, wetland shore lands that lack accessibility, streams and tributaries flowing into river are degraded
- City adheres to a Habitat Plan that serves as a guideline for protecting the River
- Trail Segments Studied
  - Existing trail got new natural surfacing and grading modifications
  - Tate & Lyle Re-Route: current alignment near Riverside neighborhood unsafe for trail users with grade railroad crossing; two re-route alternatives considered
    - Route trail closer to the River



- Inland route
  - Segment 1-Spring Street to Munger Landing: trail extension possibilities limited with BN rail line to the west and little room between water's edge and City owned rail. Trail would be close to river.
  - Segment 2-Munger Landing to Blackmer Park: trail extension and EPA cleanup site, inland route opportunities studied to avoid wetland impact
  - Segment 3-Blackmer Park to Boat House Point: City collaborate with EPA to establish once the area and US Steel site is cleaned up
  - Segment 4- Boat House Point to East McCuen Street: 1.5 miles long and begins by Wire Mill Pond and extends to Mud Lake Causeway with existing rail line, little room next to US Steel site for trail expansion to go
  - Segment 5 – East McCuen Street to Boy Scout Landing: rail line terminates at Boy Scout Landing
  - Segment 6 – Boy Scout Landing to Perch Lake: informally using old rail line as trail area
  - Segment 7 – Perch Lake to Chambers Grove Park: portion of segment under construction by MNDOT, Chamber Grove has an existing trailhead
- **Vision, Trends & Public Values**
  - Vision is to address additional recreational opportunities in an area of west Duluth with limited uses
  - Guiding Principles to measure success
    - Community connection
    - Unique Duluth experience
    - Equitable experience
    - Technically & environmentally feasible
    - Environmentally sustainable
    - Promote economic development
  - Trends in Duluth show potential for population growth in Duluth
    - Tourism opportunities
    - Value of living in less congested areas
    - Growing interest in public health
  - Conservation is part of recreation
- **Community Engagement**
  - City ran the community engagement process with LHB Inc. to get feedback from stakeholders and community members
  - 39-member stakeholder committee
    - Five ½ day workshops – explored branding, history, programming, trail options and extension areas
  - City hosted meetings with Lake Superior Mississippi Railroad (LSMR)
    - five times to discuss potential business plans
  - Natural Resource Management Group meetings
    - Experts in water quality and restoration
  - Hosted table at US Steel's EPA Public Meeting last summer
  - Four presentations for Parks Commission
  - Two public meetings

- Two surveys
  - Three-week online survey
    - 988 respondents
  - City facilitated randomly sampled 5<sup>th</sup> district phone survey
    - West Duluth neighborhoods
- **Master Plan Development**
  - Trail Interpretation Process – unique features of the region, key stories, honor the area and tell cultural and historical story, potential to rename trail
  - Trail Types – studied the feasibility and environmental impacts of extending the trail along the shoreline, determined the following trail types
    - Traditional Inland Route
    - Tight to Shoreline Embankment
    - Wetland Encroachment

Bringman: Indicated that these trail types allowed them to assign a dollar value to proposed plans, while striving for a 5% longitude slope, and maintaining a safe enough distance from the existing rail. Stated the trail is intended for multi-functional use, and they hope to meet the ADA accessibility standards. Indicated the City is committed to working in collaboration to study culturally sensitive areas within the plan. Indicated they then looked at programming options for the area and linear parks and shared concepts they heard from both the stakeholders and survey results:

- True multi-use trail and nature paths
- Points of interest with interpretive signage
- Keep sites as natural as possible
- Parking accommodations at access sites
  - Space for shuttles/large trailers
- Multi-use gathering space
- Accessible non-motorized boat launches
- Toilet facilities and/or changing enclosures
- Staging area for larger groups
- Temporary concessions
  - Concrete pad for temporary structure
- Ecological interpretation
- Pollinator/restoration plantings
- Formal seating
- Field/open lawn space
- Fishing piers/docks
- Swimming beach
- Sheltered bays for beginner paddlers
- Create opportunities for rail-trail-water experiences

Bringman: Highlighted key takeaways from the online survey:

- 50% of respondents utilized the existing trail once a month to once a year
- 40% of respondents stated they use the existing LSMR excursion train once a year
- 30% of respondents had never used one of the existing river public access sites
- Over 70% of respondents prefer walking as a primary activity on the trail, followed by bird

watching at 36%

- The majority of respondents prefer to honor and celebrate the St. Louis River and Estuary
- Kayak and canoe put-in sites were ranked highest for site improvements

Bringman: Discussed survey results and major take-a-ways from the fifth district phone survey:

- 46% of all respondent's identified the LSMR as being somewhat important to them
- 61% of all the respondent's said the railroad was of importance to the entire community
- 11% of all respondents use the rail at least one time a year
- 64% of all respondents considered the Western Waterfront Trail (WWFT) important to them personally
- 74% of all respondents said the WWFT was important to the entire community
- 48% of all respondents use the trail at least four times per year
- 83% of the respondents were supportive of extending the trail
- Environmental sustainability was rated in the top two in terms of guiding principles

Bringman: Recited sample question from the survey, "As one option the City has been seeking to find a way to extend the trail without having to remove the City-owned rail line between Smithville and Gary New Duluth that is used by the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad for their seasonal passenger train trips. If for any reason extending the trail while keeping the railroad proves not to be feasible, the City may have to choose one or the other, rail or trail". Stated that overall, 54% favored the trail option, 32% favored the rail option, and 14% did not have an opinion. Discussed the cost of trail types and indicated this is how they started to compare costs of different scenarios for eight different trail types:

- Traditional on-existing trail bed: \$100 per linear foot
- Traditional next to existing trail: \$180 per linear foot
- Inland route on cleared alignment: \$225 per linear foot
- Inland route on forested alignment: \$270 per linear foot
- Wetland encroachment: \$275 per linear foot
- Tight to shoreline fill slope: \$375 per linear foot
- Tight to shoreline elevated structure: \$2,000 per linear foot
- Causeway widening: \$2,000 per linear foot

Bringman: Explained that with these established rail type costs, they put together four scenarios: trail only, rail with optimum trail, and trail with value engineered trail, noting the significant cost difference between trail types. Indicated that they paused at this point to determine feasibility, and realized the rail with optimum trail option at an estimated \$22 million would not be economically feasible for the community, and likely be prohibited by environmental regulations. Noted the potential disruption to the river and how building a trail right up to the shoreline would not be in sync with improving the ecological health of the St. Louis River. Stated that the City strived to retain the rail and trail concept, however it was not feasible. Indicated that Mud Lake was up for restoration in the near future, therefore they studied with Natural Resources Managers to determine how they would restore the area. Indicated that removal of the one mile of the causeway is being recommended by the City. Discussed implementation recommendations for each trail segment:

- Segment 1: from Spirit Lake Marina to Munger Landing, put trail on existing LSMR trail line and move the train track over 30 feet



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- Segment 2: from Munger Landing to Blackmer Park, leave rail where it is and run the trail inland down Clyde Avenue down public right of way that is informally used as trail currently
- Segment 3: within clean up area, EPA removing rail line as part of their project, propose to have them put rail back inward, at Wire Mill Pond the train track will remain in current area
- Segment 4: proposed removal of causeway, Mud Lake restoration to deep water condition, removing causeway, restored wetlands along shoreline, salvage excavated material from dredging and creating an embankment for trail
- Segment 5: complete rail to trail conversion,
- Segment 6: existing trail corridor, trail runs along rivers edge
- Segment 7: existing trail corridor, far west side already being built by MNDOT, trail here will have to run next to road due to private property ownership

Bringman: Indicated that the City will serve as the lead on plan implementation, highlighting major components of the upcoming timeline:

- 1-5 years
  - existing signage and wayfinding plan implemented in 2018
  - Working on existing trail reroute crossing with BN
  - Lower Spirit site improvements take place
  - EPA clean up
  - Trail interpretive planning process
  - Trail segment 1 and 7
- 5-10+ years
  - Rest of the trail segments
  - Public access and park sites

Bringman: Indicated that when they were studying water access, they realized there were areas you could put in your boats, although from Munger Landing to Boy Scout landing (4.4-mile gap,) there wasn't any existing water access. Stated that with the proposed access points, accessibility to the river will be addressed. Highlighted existing trailheads and noted that with the implementation of this plan, five new trail head locations will be added. Discussed site improvement plans for the following areas:

- Lower Spirit
  - New trailhead and directional signage
  - Parking for ten, additional trailer parking for eight
  - Portable toilet with changing enclosure
  - Two beach access points with shore fishing (non-motorized)
  - Landscape restoration planting
  - Rename to Spirit Landing to better represent the area
- Munger Landing
  - New trailhead with directional signage
  - Separate non-motorized launch
  - Additional parking
  - Work in partnership with MPCA on monitoring aquatic cleanup of this site
- Slag Point
  - Currently US Steel property along shoreline

- Non-motorized watercraft launching
- Trail hiking loop
- Beach area
- Fishing pier
- Parking
- Changing enclosure and portable toilet area
- Boat House Point
  - EPA cleanup area near Wire Mill Pond
  - Signage and kiosk
  - Train track ends: 900-foot turnaround proposed for LSMR
    - LSMR desires dead end track for emergency staging area
    - Opportunity to showcase history here through memorial pathway
  - Hiking loop
- Mud Lake
  - Part of restoration project
  - Fishing pier on southern end of causeway
  - Another watercraft landing
- Boy Scout Landing
  - Already being used as DNR motorized boat landing
  - Separate non-motorized boat launch
  - Potential for swimming
  - Shore fishing
  - Concession stand opportunity
    - Fishing opener
  - Trail extension
- Perch Lake
  - Culvert access underneath road
  - ADA trail access
  - Additional parking
  - Portable toilet with changing enclosure
  - Scenic overlook

Bringman: Provided final summary of cost at \$6.1 million for the City's proposed trail recommendations, noting that the cost takes out the cost for segment three assuming it will be funded by contributions from the EPA. Indicated an additional \$2.1 million is estimated for public access and park site recommendations.

Schraepfer: Requested clarification on the EPA numbers and the new dollar amount.

Luukkala: Indicated that the cost assumptions require more research and explained she has the following questions for the Commission:

- How to develop rail to trail options that the City can actually secure funds to construct in a reasonable timeline? Point of contention is that a rail and trail is not financially feasible and therefore if that was chosen, they would never be able to implement it based on costs.
  - Proposed plan based on two assumptions:



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- Affordability of the half mile in trail segment one has many spatial limitations and the City determined only two of three options would be financially feasible. The least expensive is to convert lower track to trail, however not preferred option. The second option is to move a portion of the lower rail line upland and make room to afford to construct the trail on the existing rail. Indicated this requires BN to agree to allow the City to move the lower rail segment into their easement and at this time the City is not certain this would be accommodated.
- The 1.6 miles of trail segment three that travels through US Steel would not be affordable as a rail and trail option without US Steel and EPA funding. They have not received formal acceptance from US Steel and EPA to restore the river front and provide property easements as necessary.

Luukkala: Questioned whether the Commission felt confident proceeding with the next step of the process which is releasing the draft plan for public review, or if they would prefer to wait until funding assumptions were further explored.

Schmidt: Requested clarification of Ms. Luukkala's question to the Commission.

Luukkala: Stated that there are two locations where they have built a plan around financial assumptions that are not secured, and if they did not come into fruition, they believe it would not be a financially feasible plan.

Schraepfer: Summarized Ms. Luukkala's request from the Commission and questioned whether the plan would not be feasible if the two funding sources were not secured.

Luukkala: Confirmed that the plan as proposed would not be financially feasible and they would have to go back and make adjustments.

Isernhagen: Questioned if the Commission was being asked to vote only on segment one and two.

Luukkala: Confirmed action is not being requested, rather feedback on how the Commission wishes to proceed with the public comment period.

Schraepfer: Questioned if the plan as is would include the cost of removing the causeway.

Luukkala: Confirmed no, and that they are in a preliminary position in terms of restoration with the DNR and EPA for the area, therefore a cost is not defined as the City is waiting for a restoration plan from them. Indicated that restoration costs are secured through other funding sources.

Schraepfer: Questioned if removing the causeway has potential cost savings.

Luukkala: Stated that removing impairments is the goal for restoration, and because the causeway is the largest impairment, the suggested removal should allow for funding from the EPA and DNR.

Wodash: Questioned what the outcome will be if the Commission decided against the proposed



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plan.

Luukkala: Indicated they will have to determine their next steps through further analysis.

Bringman: Stated they would have to go back and have conversations with environmental regulators.

Luukkala: Stated that the idea of building a half mile of trail for \$1.6 million dollars is something planners believe is not feasible.

Torch: Referred to staff's current workloads and suggested they hold off on public comment until they have greater certainty regarding funding sources.

Vogtman: Questioned if moving forward with the public process would help the City with making arrangements with BN and US Steel.

Luukkala: Stated that both are aware the City is looking to proceed in a timely fashion.

Rohrbaugh: Suggested holding off on the public comment period.

Bergerson: Agreed with Commissioner Rohrbaugh on holding off and questioned if the project would be less expensive should the causeway be removed.

Luukkala: Explained the entire funding package for a rail and trail option requires them to be creative with partnerships, and removal of the causeway would not be on the City's dime, rather part of a larger funding package brought forward by the MPCA, EPA and DNR who have been working on remediation projects along the St. Louis River area.

Breeuwer: Expressed his support in postponing publication to the public.

Schraepfer: Complimented Ms. Luukkala and Ms. Bringman on their presentation.

Wodash: Agreed with Commissioner Schraepfer that the information was well explained. Supported holding off on the public comment period and questioned if the Commission can help in any way to push the US Steel and EPA folks to understand the urgency.

Schmidt: Questioned how the timeline would change.

Luukkala: Confirmed the timeline will change as they had anticipated opening the plan for public comment starting next Wednesday and meeting with the Trails Committee in November. Stated they will push this timeline back an additional month to accommodate the request for more information.

Isernhagen: Recognized the amount of work by staff and expressed support of delaying the public comment period. Discussed Perch Lake and indicated he spoke to residents in the area and has mixed feelings regarding moving the location.



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Luukkala: Stated that their initial plans called for an inland launch at Perch Lake and because it is a dead end City street, it had access potential. Indicated there is currently a large culvert under 23 and in the future there may be the potential to increase the size. Confirmed that they've reached out to property owners at this location and will continue to discuss the plans, as the DNR may dictate some of the improvements.

Wodash: Questioned whether they would like a Commission vote regarding support of the rail and trail option proposed.

Filby Williams: Explained that the City of Duluth is determined to find a way to retain the rail and add trail. Stated that he does not believe it's necessary to take formal action expressing support for their proposed direction. Confirmed that holding off will create some helpful urgency in their requests to BN, US Steel and the EPA. Stated that trail construction along Mud Lake and removal of the causeway is more financially possible because it moves financing request for restoration to Federal and State partners.

Schmidt: Questioned if any Commissioners were opposed to extending the deadline.

Schraepfer: Questioned the math presented and indicated the graph showed three numbers, however now they are being told \$6 million. Requested clarification.

Bringman: Indicated that the numbers are used to tell a baseline story and they assumed the EPA was not going to pay for anything. Confirmed that the \$6 million has the three segments to be paid for by the EPA removed.

Breeuwer: Suggested revising the plan to reflect these numbers.

Vogtman: Thanked presenters for their hard work and stated his view that this project is the Lakewalk of western Duluth and will have a huge economic impact to Duluth.

Breeuwer: Requested funding information regarding the 900 feet of runaround track.

Luukkala: Stated they are working on this number with LSMR to design a cost estimate.

Breeuwer: Requested this information be included on the plan.

Luukkala: Confirmed they will include this once available.

Mike Casey (public): Introduced himself and position as the Chair of Friends of Western Duluth Parks and Trails. Indicated that all stakeholders involved in the planning process would appreciate a copy of the latest draft as they put a great deal of time into it. Stated that the dollar amounts are really confusing. Indicated the Spirit Mountain plan impacts the Western Waterfront Trail and that a paddle center is referred to thirteen times. Explained that during the Water Trail Plan they determined a stronger definition of what a paddle center should be established before they include it in new plans for Tallas Island. Indicated there is currently an Environmental Assessment Worksheet request for Tallas





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Island. Stated that the plan is river friendly sometimes and others times not. Indicated that it is often brought up that parks is understaffed and overworked, and stated that the parks and Mini-Master Plans are suffering as a result. Questioned if it is better to cut down on the amount of projects.

Dave Moore (public): Introduced himself as a board member for LSMR. Complimented staff on the presentation and indicated they are happy to accommodate and coexist with the trail. Stated that he believes the rail and trail are a transportation system, and although the rail is not used year round, it is still part of that system. Indicated they agree with some of the plan, but not all and are not happy about removal of the causeway and early termination of the rail. Stated that Duluth is a wonderful place to live with good parks and recreational trails. Expressed hope that the causeway is maintained and indicated the need for additional study regarding the cost and complexity of removing the causeway.

Luukkala: Provided closing comments and reminded Commission they have been working on the project for fifteen months and are driven to deliver a plan that connects the community to the water. Stated that there will be inevitable tradeoffs and compromises. Indicated that the City acknowledges how special LSMR is, and stated as a Park Planner she is tasked with increasing recreational access and promoting the health and wellbeing of the community.

- F. Parks Fund Grant Awards Fall 2017 – Cheryl Skafte, Provisional Assistant Manager, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Division (action requested)

Skafte: Indicated she will run through the process for the 2017 Parks Fund Grants and then provide the funding recommendations. Noted that the grants are first reviewed by a Project Proposal Team who determines whether they can move forward to the Selection Committee. Listed the three Commissioners that serve on the Selection Committee and highlighted the decisions from both meetings:

- Lincoln Park Children & Families Collaborative: determined ineligible by the Project Proposal Review Team and requested it go through the Public Arts Commission
- Neighbors of Lower Chester: determined ineligible by the Project Proposal Review Team and encouraged reapplication after the Mini-Master Plan is completed
- Norton Park Community Club: determined ineligible by the Project Proposal Review Team and encouraged reapplication after more detailed funding request was determined
- Northland Paddlers Alliance: Denied by the Selection Committee as grant guidelines state grantees cannot be funded for the same project more than two times
- Duluth Area Family YMCA: Denied by the Selection Committee as grant guidelines state grantees cannot be funded for the same project more than two times
- Chester Bowl Improvement Club: \$5,000 approved for purchase of a chair lift slip tester and ten radios; no contingencies
- Morgan park Smithville Community Club: \$5,000 approved for purchase of lawn mower; contingency that the lawn mower be stored on site
- The Hills Youth and Family Services: \$5,000 for the purchase of presentation equipment and a bike rack for Washington Center; contingency that they work with Park Maintenance on rack design approval
- Northern Expressions Arts Collective: \$1,500 approved to host themed community potluck



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nights; no contingencies

- Welch Center: \$5,000 approved for winter youth program expansion; contingency that events take place within City of Duluth
- Duluth Area Horse Trail Alliance: \$5,000 approved for signage improvements at Ely's Peak; contingency to work with Trails Coordinator Andy Holak on design
- Ecolibrium3: \$1,500 approved for the installation of semi-permanent interpretive kiosks at Lincoln Park; contingency to work with Project Coordinator Lisa Luukkala on design
- St. Louis River Alliance: \$5,000 approved for design and printing of Water Trail Map; contingency to work with Project Coordinator Lisa Luukkala on design
- Superior Hiking Trail Association: \$3,150 approved for signage creation and installation along two hiking trail loops; contingency to work with Trails Coordinator Andy Holak on design
- Duluth Climbers Coalition: \$5,000 approved for construction of an ADA trail loop at Quarry Park; contingency to work with Project Coordinator Jim Shoberg on design
- Piedmont Heights Amateur Hockey Association: \$5,000 for kitchen renovations; contingency to work with Construction Manager Mike LeBeau

Skaftte: Indicated they are seeking action for approval of \$46,150 in funding for the Fall 2017 Parks Fund Grants.

**MOTION/Second:** Torch/Vogtman to approve the funding recommendations for the Fall Parks Fund Grants. Unanimously approved.

- G. Parks Storm Damage and Repair Plan – Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration, City of Duluth (informational)

Filby Williams: Indicated the current estimate is \$2.5 million in damages to shoreline infrastructure from last week's storm, concentrated at Brighton Beach, the Lakewalk, and two areas along the LSMR rail bed. Stated they've done cleanup to allow reopening of the Lakewalk, however they are holding off on any major restoration as they will hire a coastal engineering firm to comprehensively assess all of the damage to the coastal infrastructure and advise on how to put it back and meet the challenges of climate change for future resiliency. Indicated the Lakewalk planning may be delayed so it is informed by this coastal engineering firm.

Skaftte: Informed Commission they are holding a volunteer event from 10-11:30am on Sunday to remove garbage and litter debris from the Lakewalk and will have staff and supplies available at Brighton Beach, Endion, 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Park Point Beach House.

### 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, November 16 at noon in the Parks office  
Chair – John Schmidt – Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby [Cheryl Skaftte]
- C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: TBD  
Chair – Tjaard Breeuwer– Tiersa Wodash, Britt Rohrbaugh, Dudley Edmondson, Dean Vogtman, Art Johnston, Mike Casey, Eric Viken, Shawna Mullen [Andy Holak]



# PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of November 8, 2017

City Hall – Council Chambers  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St



- 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: Indicated that the news Parks Manager, Will Roche will begin on Monday, November 13<sup>th</sup>.

## X. Public Comment

Denette Lynch: Expressed appreciation for presentation of the Parks Fund Grants in a manner that explained exactly what they were funded for and why. Indicated Friends of Dog Parks received a Spring 2017 grant to install benches at Observation Dog Park, noting they were installed today.

Schmidt: Thanked Mrs. Lynch for her work on dog parks.

Rich Williams: Stated that he listened to the rail and trail proposal, and questioned if having an incomplete trail is an option, as a non-continuous trail may be cheaper.

## XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:16 pm. Moved by Commissioner Torch. Second by Commissioner Vogtman.

## XII. Next Meeting

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