



# PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of June 10, 2015

Central Hillside Center  
12 E 4<sup>th</sup> St



## 1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:04 pm.

## 2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Commissioners Albright, Breeuwer, Contardo, Crosby, Hall Holak, and Schraepfer

NOT PRESENT: Commissioners Torch, Dodge, Schmidt, and Welles

## 3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Schraepfer motioned for approval of the May 13 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Breeuwer. All approved.

## 4. Introduction

Introduction of Josh Abraham, newly hired Recreation Specialist with the Parks and Recreation Division.

## 5. Comments on the Zoo

- A. Jay Bonge (resident) highlighted the recovery that has happened at the Zoo since the flood and stated he believes this is an opportunity to see a full recovery of the Zoo and its amenities. He does not support a drastic revision or reduction of the Zoo experience.
- B. Bill Lynch (resident) suggested a path to connect with Indian Point shouldn't have to run along the southwest side of Keene Creek. Mr. Lynch suggested a path along Grand Avenue would be a better option. The \$500,000 the City is using to subsidize the Zoo comes from tourism tax, which is an appropriate use of that revenue source. The City has already invested money in the NorShor Theater, which is sitting unused and so the City should be willing to invest in an amenity such as the Zoo that is being used. Mr Lynch also suggested an additional option for the Zoo be brought forward that does not reduce the Zoo's footprint.
- C. Rose Hanson (resident) asked if the Commission has the ability to postpone a decision, regarding the Zoo, until after a new mayoral administration comes into place.
  1. Commissioner Hall responded the Commission is committed to seeing a robust process that won't be tied to a timeline-dependent finish-before or after the current Administration's term ends.
- D. Jean Kinensie (resident) feels all residents of Duluth should be considered in the decision and not just the residents of west Duluth. She urged the City to engage as broad a citizenry as possible. She is opposed to losing the southwest portion of the Zoo for development of a trail and park experience. Ms. Kinensie highlighted that Keene Creek requires a 200' setback as a cold-water trout stream. The 200' floodplain restricts the type of development that can occur and needs to be taken into consideration.
- E. Commissioner Contardo asked if there are talks scheduled between the City and Zoo in the foreseeable future.
  1. Commissioner Hall and Councilor Sipress noted that a meeting recently occurred between the City and the Zoo. Both positive and optimistic feedback was received.

- F. Bill Lynch asked how FEMA funds were used within the Zoo.
  - 1. Ms. Bergen responded that FEMA funds were awarded for repairs at the Polar Shores exhibit but the funds awarded were not sufficient to bring the space up to AZA standards for a polar exhibit. The funds were reallocated for use within the Forest Discovery Zone, which is approved as appropriate use by FEMA since funds would still be utilized within the same area.
- G. Jean Kinensie asked the length of the contract the Zoo has with the City.
  - 1. Ms. Bergen noted the contract expires at the end of the year.
- H. Charlie Studahar (resident) commented the Zoo is a regional attraction, drawing tourists. He believes the Zoo adds another option to the array available in Duluth and feels the Zoo complements the trails that are being developed.
- I. Leona Creek (resident) encouraged the Commission to support the Zoo and asked that all options on the table be considered.
- J. Commissioner Schraepfer noted a major factor leading to the current challenges at the Zoo is deferred maintenance. He asked that more detailed cost breakdowns on each option for the Zoo and Fairmount Park be made available.

## 6. Updates on St. Louis River Corridor Projects

- A. Jim Shoberg
  - 1. Duluth Winnipeg Pacific Railroad (DWP) Rail To Trail:
    - a) The trail will be restored to meet ADA standards, bridges will be improved, it will be paved as far as Spirit Mountain as part of the Cross City Trail with additional improvements possible further west on the DWP.
  - 2. Duluth Traverse:
    - a) The City is seeking bids on a 2.5 mile segment to be built this year. The City is working with FEMA to negotiate potential funding. The Enger Trail is being built using a federal recreational grant.
  - 3. Destination Loop Trails:
    - a) Five trails are being considered as loop trails off the Superior Hiking Trail.
  - 4. Western Waterfront Trail:
    - a) The City has received two grants. One grant is to be used to restore the surface and fix stormwater issues in various locations. The second grant will remove invasive species and plant natural landscapes.
    - b) The City has applied for two additional grants from federal and state sources to extend the trail to Morgan Park. The grants would be used as a 1-1 match with the 1/2 and 1/2 Tourism Tax.
  - 5. Tallas Island:
    - a) A mini-master plan is currently in the visioning stage for Tallas Island. The plan calls for a non-motorized boat entrance at Knowlton Creek. A public process will be held to solidify plans.
- B. Lisa Luokkala
  - 1. Parks within the River Corridor are divided into "Neighborhood Parks" and "Grand Avenue Parks".
    - a) Neighborhood Parks (smaller size) will be eligible for \$50,000 after a mini-master plan process is completed with a 1:1 match.
    - b) The \$50,000 match by the neighborhood/community club can include in-kind donations such as labor or materials.
      - 1) Commissioner Hall asked how funding allocations would be determined.

- Ms. Luukkala responded it would likely be similar to the current granting process for the Park Fund Grants.
- c) Grand Avenue Parks (more prominent)
  - 1) The four marquee parks along the Grand Avenue Corridor (Gary New Duluth, Memorial Park, Wheeler Athletic Complex, Lincoln Park)
    - Gary New Duluth has already fundraised the \$500,000 and will be accessing their funds soon.
- C. John Ramos, a reporter with the Reader Weekly, asked if costs for consultants come out of the half and half tourism tax and how consultants are decided.
  1. Ms. Bergen confirmed that the consultant costs are coming out of the half and half tourism tax. If the cost of the consultant exceeds a threshold of \$40,000, hiring them must be approved by City Council.
- D. Connie Molar (resident) emphasized the importance of getting citizen input during the planning process, before a plan is brought forward.
- E. Gail Gundle (resident) shared concerns about what is happening on the Western Waterfront Trail and that feedback will not be heard because there is not a user group such as paddlers or bikers that the City is utilizing. She is concerned about loss of habitat for birds and butterflies.
  1. Mr. Shoberg noted that the trail was originally built as a 10 foot trail but vegetation has become overgrown and limited to 6 feet or less. Restoring the trail to 10 feet will not significantly impact long-standing vegetation.

**7. Commission Committees**

- A. No updates from any committees

**8. Commissioner and Liaison Reports**

- A. Commissioner Albright noted that an informational tour of the Zoo is being planned for Parks Commissioners.

**9. New Business**

- A. Wolves Within City Parks

There have been scattered reports of wolves within City boundaries recently. This is informational only, in the event the issue comes before the Commission in the future.

**10. Old Business**

- A. Chester Bowl Cell Tower

The cell tower has been installed and mitigation work is currently being completed. The goal is to be finished with mitigation by the end of this week.

- B. Wheeler Cell Tower

There has been no update since the previous month when locations were being considered, one of which is Wheeler.

C. Park Vandalism

There is a new initiative called "Protect Our Parks" aimed at addressing vandalism. Ms. Bergen offered to bring staff to the Commission meeting to discuss the efforts.

D. Grand Avenue Nordic Center

The Mini-Master Plan is on the agenda for the June 15<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting.

**11. Division Manager's Report**

A. The report will be disseminated to Commissioners this week.

**12. Public Comment**

**13. Adjournment**

Motion made by Commissioner Albright, seconded by Commissioner Schraepfer. Motion carried with unanimous approval. Meeting adjourned at 7:05