



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting of February 13, 2013



Chairman Welles called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM at the Central Hillside Center.

Members Present: Thomas Beery, Erica Erickson, Karen Erickson, Edwin Hall, Susan Beasy Latto, Kristen Ridgewell, Eric Viken, and Jon Welles

Members Excused: Barbara Stark

Members Absent: Joel Braun and Andy Holak

Motion of approval for the January 9, 2013 meeting by Kristen Ridgewell, supported by Jon Welles; unanimously approved.

PRESENTATIONS:

Judy Gibbs, Trail Coordinator for the Parks and Recreation Division, provided the Commission with an up-date on the status of Off Leash Dog Trail Areas and Off Leash Dog Parks in the City of Duluth. A written report, together with maps of the winter and summer use of the Lester Amity Trail System for off-leash dogs, was received by the Commission and incorporated as part of the minutes of this meeting.

At the current time the City of Duluth (per a 2007 City Council Resolution passed in 2008) has permitted the use of City trails by off-leash dogs in only 3 areas: Lester Amity, Central Park below Enger Park, and Birchwood Park (South of Heard Street between 102nd Ave. and 105th Ave. W). Only 1 fenced in park (Keene Creek Park) has been designated for off leash dogs. Off leash dogs are prohibited from being on all other City of Duluth trails and parks. There was a discussion of future public education and enforcement plans, as set forth in the written report.

It is anticipated that the City Council will consider a Resolution sponsored by Councilor Hartman on February 25, which will ask the Parks and Recreation Commission to review issues related to the use of City Parks and Trails by off-leash dogs, and make recommendations to the City Council for future action. It was noted that only the City Council has authority to determine the use of city trails. Upon passage of this Resolution, the Commission will appoint a special Task Force to address these issues.

Commissioners discussed the need for careful planning, as well as public discussion and understanding of issues related to use of all city trails and parks by dogs, whether on leash, or off-leash in officially designated areas. Concerns were also expressed about the use of specifically designated trails, such as cross-country, hiking, or snowmobile trails, for purposes not publicly designated for that particular use.

COMMISSION COMMITTEES:

Parks and Facilities: Chairman Welles reported that the committee planned to meet in the near future.

Administrative (E-Board): Commissioner Ridgewell reported the E- Board had met to set the agenda for this meeting.

Trails and Bikeways: Commissioner Beery indicated the committee had not met, but shared the following information with the Commission. He updated the Commission on activities of the "Outdoor Alliance", a coalition of citizen groups in Duluth working on issues pertaining to the city's parks, trails and recreation areas. He encouraged a closer dialogue between them and the Commission. One of their committees, a "Land Assemblage Committee" is looking at issues of land acquisition that may overlap the Trails and Bikeways Master Plan and future objectives. The next meeting of the Alliance is March 6 or 7. Commissioner Beery indicated he would notify Commissioners of the exact date and plans to attend on behalf of the Commission.

A joint City/County Committee is looking at future trail corridors, and ways to obtain funding to acquire them for public use. A MN Land Trust contract is facilitating this work.

Commissioner Viken reported that the Duluth Planning Commission is scheduled to review issues related to the Duluth Traverse on March 12. It is hoped that contracts for work can be put out for bid and subsequent City Council approval, to allow for construction work on Phase I (3 miles in the Lester Park area and parts of Mission Creek) to begin in early spring. It is anticipated that Phase 2 of the Duluth Traverse Initiative, completing work in the Mission Creek area, would be done in 2014.

Commissioner Viken also reported that he and Judy Gibbs had recently hiked the corridor that could become part of the Duluth Traverse on the old Central High School property. Art Johnston, Liaison for the City School Board, asked for guidance from the Commission and Parks Division regarding the appropriate time for approaching the School Board for an easement through the property for the Duluth Traverse that would not create an encumbrance on the property which could adversely impact the School District's plans to sell the property. Tom Beery encouraged continued close coordination with the School District regarding the future use of all current school properties that might enhance the City's Parks, Trails and Recreation objectives.

It was agreed that the Agenda for the March 13 Commission meeting should include an update on the status of the Duluth Traverse project.

Recreation Programming – Youth and Adult: Commissioner Ridgewell reported that this committee is scheduled to meet at the end of February.

COMMISSIONER AND LIAISON REPORTS:

Commissioner Beery reported on the Park Point Small Area Management Plan meetings, which he is attending on behalf of the Commission. A Public Meeting is scheduled for February 28 at Lafayette Community Center.

Commissioner Karen Erickson commented on the lighting of Enger Tower for special occasions. Kathy Bergen reported that the City is developing a policy for future lighting of the tower.

Commissioner Ridgewell reported that citizens in West Duluth would like to designate a portion of the Keene Creek Park that is designated for off-leash dogs, as an area for small off-leash dogs, add benches and increase use of wood chips in appropriate areas. Kathy Bergen noted that there is a Dog Parks Fund, which may be available for improvements to this off-leash park. In addition, citizens in the area can apply for a Parks Fund Neighborhood Grant for the park.

Commissioner Viken noted reports of cars being broken into at the Piedmont and other parking areas near cross-country ski access. Judy Gibbs reported that the Parks Division has been addressing these issues with the Police Department to provide enhanced surveillance and signage in these areas of concern. Commissioner Ridgewell noted that the West Duluth CDC had assisted in the purchase of cameras for enhanced police surveillance.

Commissioner Erika Erickson asked about the status of animal trapping on city property. Kathy Bergen stated that animal trapping is not legal on City Park property.

Commissioner Erickson also informed Commissioners that the Commission on Disabilities has recommended that the phrases accessible and universal accessibility be used in the future, rather than the term handicapped. She felt this was important for the Parks Division to know as future signage is developed for the City's parks.

NEW BUSINESS:

Commissioners Beery, Hall, Ridgewell and Welles were appointed to serve as the Parks and Recreation Commission Representatives on the Committee to Review Parks Fund Neighborhood Grants for calendar year 2013.

The Recreation Programming Committee was asked to consult with appropriate City officials and make a recommendation to the Commission at its next meeting on how best to proceed with the existing parks programs/facilities "pull tab" funded grant program in the future, in light of the new Parks Neighborhood Grants Program. The Pull Tab" Program Fund has \$19,484 currently available for grants.

The 2013 Annual Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission is set for 5 pm on April 3, 2013 at the City of Duluth Public Safety Building. Commissioners Latto and Ridgewell agreed to work with the E-Board to assist in developing the Agenda for the Annual Meeting, together with Judy Gibbs and Kathy Bergen.

OLD BUSINESS:

ADA Code Enforcement: Commissioner Erika Erickson noted that the Disabilities Commission was concerned that there was currently not a person designated in the City of Duluth with responsibility for enforcement of the ADA Code. Current responsibility for enforcement rests with the MN Department of Justice in St. Paul. It was hoped that this might change in the future.

DIVISION MANAGER'S REPORT:

This month's Good News from Parks and Recreation will be distributed by email in a few days.

The 2013 Operating and Capital Projects Budgets for Parks and Recreation are being finalized, and will be available for discussion at the March 13 meeting of the Commission. Kathy Bergen reported that some tourism related projects such as resurfacing the Lakewalk and signage directing visitors to City parks, might be funded from the Tourism Tax Fund this year, freeing up moneys for other needed projects from the Parks Fund. She also noted that the bathrooms at Enger Park would be remodeled this summer, assisted by the generous support of a \$125,000 grant from the Duluth Rotary Club.

PUBLIC COMMENT/SPEAKERS: None

ADJORNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM on motion of Erica Erickson, second by Karen Erickson and a unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted,
Edwin K. Hall, Secretary