



PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of July 8, 2015

Central Hillside Center
12 E 4th St



1. CALL TO ORDER

Call Meeting to Order 5:02 PM by President Hall

2. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Tom Albright, Amanda Crosby, Ed Hall, John Schmidt, Michael Schraepfer, Erik Torch, Jon Welles and Tiersa Wodash

Commissioners Absent: Tjaard Breeuwer, Patrick Contardo and Andy Holak

3. MINUTES

Approval of June 4, 2015 minutes of the special meeting regarding the future of Fairmount Park and the Lake Superior Zoo. Commissioner Albright motioned approval, second by Commissioner Welles, all in favor.

Approval of June 10, 2015 minutes motioned by Commissioner Welles, second by Commissioner Schraepfer, all in favor.

4. PRESENTATIONS

A. Duluth Children's Outdoor Charter - Scott Pilate (ISD 709), Tracie Clanaugh (YMCA) and Jessica Schiff (Woodland Hills)

A proposal to charter a continuum of youth services taking advantage of outdoor recreation amenities in Duluth. The hope is adoption of the Charter will help secure more grants. The group is part of a larger effort including the Northland Foundation, the Minnesota Land Trust and many youth development and outdoor recreation groups working on bridging the adventure gap. The group has been meeting to discuss this issue and they are supportive of this effort.

The Charter is based on a similar document from Ontario which Mr. Pilate saw and was inspired by.

Ms. Clanaugh stated the YMCA knows the value of outdoor experiences for children as Camp Miller started 117 years ago. Currently strong partnerships between many groups serve 2,500 children a year. They view the Charter as a tool to aid in the provision of greater opportunities and services to more children. Ms. Clanaugh and the YMCA of Duluth fully support this effort.

Ms. Schiff (works at Woodland Hills and worked at UMD Outdoor Recreation) researched motivations and barriers of children in the Central Hillside pertaining to getting outside. Ms. Schiff believes supporting the Charter is an opportunity to encourage healthy outdoor recreation for youth and another step toward removal of barriers. She feels youth centers across the City lack the equipment and technical knowledge needed to undertake consistent outdoor recreation programs. Ms. Schiff also believes this is the next logical step following the

investments made in our parks' infrastructure.

Mr. Pilate reported UMD is currently working to get student interns into youth programs. They (UMD) seek to transition outdoor isolated exposure experiences to more cohesive experiences that build skills over time.

Commissioner Albright drafted a supporting resolution of the Charter. (See under MOTIONS at the end of this document.)

Commissioner Wodash asked which groups have agreed to be a part of this Charter. Mr. Pilate stated UMD, ISD #709, YMCA, Woodland Hills, Valley Youth, Boys and Girls Club, Hartley Nature Center, COGGS, Duluth Cross Country Ski Club, Duluth Climbers Coalition, the Paddlers Group, Minnesota Land Trust and the Northland Foundation are several organizations participating.

Commissioner Schmidt discussed funding challenges for schools doing field trips.

Councilor Sipress thanked everyone for working on this. He is supportive of the idea.

Commissioner Albright motioned for support of the Duluth Children's Outdoor Charter, seconded by Commissioner Wodash, all in favor.

B. Grand Avenue Nordic Center Update – Jim Filby Williams

Mr. Filby Williams stated a prior Council resolution from 1984 restricted development in the area where the Nordic Center is to be built. The Administration asked the City Council to approve the Nordic Center Mini-Master Plan in order to meet funding application deadlines with the understanding they would be modifying the design to minimize neighborhood impacts. They are currently working to modify the design and it will be discussed with neighbors in August.

The City will have impacts of the new development independently assessed.

The Nordic Center Mini-Master Plan will be revised and brought to the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council in September. The State has allowed the City to submit a modified plan.

Neighbors have asked the City to affirm, modify or replace the 1984 resolution. The City is wholly committed to make this a win-win for neighbors, but stated the Council buffer was unorthodox, made a promise without any legal basis, and thus is not legally binding.

Councilor Sipress stated that although it is not legally binding, there is a moral force that goes with this resolution. He appreciates the City's willingness to work with neighbors. He also wants to see if there is a way to revise the plan that satisfies the neighbors' concerns and allows for the Nordic Center to be built.

Commissioner Schmidt commented this is not the first time dealing with the issue of a non-binding resolution that neighbors believe to be binding. He wants to see more education and better compliance with these resolutions.

Mr. Filby Williams believes the thrust of the effort should be to satisfy the spirit of the resolution. He feels the substantive needs of neighbors now should be met.

Commissioner Albright questioned if the original resolution specified development types. Mr. Filby Williams reported the resolution said no clearing or construction activities. In 2008, the Spirit Mountain Master Plan approved significant amounts of clearing and construction in the buffer zone. The EAW will look at noise and light disturbance.

Councilor Sipress is aware of past instances where promises were made or believed to have been. Credence needs to be paid to these. It needs to be clear when communicating to the public that policy decisions can be changed by future Councils. In absence of a property agreement, the City can unilaterally change the agreement.

C. New Parks Initiative "Protect Our Parks" - Park and Trail Vandalism – Cheryl Skafte and Judy Gibbs

President Hall reiterated the adoption of a resolution last August to address vandalism in our parks and on our trails.

Ms. Skafte and intern, Reef Mohsenian, have been working on an initiative to address vandalism in our parks. It is believed a decrease in vandalism will be achieved by increasing community involvement. We are trying to take a systematic approach to address issues of abandoned waste in the community. The City wants people to call 911 to report the misuse of public parks and trails.

President Hall inquired about tracking incidents of vandalism. The City doesn't have a way of tracking vandalism unless people report it. Solutions for improvement are being looked into.

There was discussion on free waste disposal options for residents.

Commissioner Schmidt would like emphasis placed on education rather than on punitive options.

Ms. Skafte referred to a blueprint used in Philadelphia that has been very successful and could be an example for us.

Julene Boe (member of the audience) serves on the WLSSD board. She works with the City on events to reduce waste. Julene is of the opinion signage at top dumping areas would be great. She would also like to see more centralized dump areas in the City.

Ms. Skafte reported the River Communities have organized clean up days with options for dumping waste for many years.

5. COMMISSION COMMITTEES

A. Parks and Facilities

Chair - Michael Schraepfer – Jon Welles, Ed Hall, John Schmidt [Dale Sellner]
Nothing to report at this meeting.

B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: Friday, July 24 at noon at Parks office

Chair – Ed Hall – Jon Welles, Erik Torch [Kathy Bergen]
Nothing to report at this meeting.

C. Trails and Bikeways

Chair – Tom Albright - Andy Holak, Tiersa Wodash [Judy Gibbs]

- Name submission process for the Lowell to Lakewalk Trail

The Committee met to discuss the Lowell to Lakewalk Trail naming. They want to run the process soon as construction will begin. Submissions will be due July 31. The shortlist will be brought to the Parks Commission at the August meeting.

D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult)

Chair - Jon Welles – Andy Holak, Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby [Pamela Page]

Nothing to report at this meeting.

6. COMMISSIONER & LIAISON REPORTS

Commissioner Schraepfer and Commissioner Schmidt met with a Park Point group to discuss public beach access issues on street ends.

Commissioner Wodash reported the Healthy Duluth Area Coalition is doing more with parklets this summer. The City is evaluating use and impact of the parklets to help inform policy going forward.

7. NEW BUSINESS

A. Eastern Dog Park

Ms. Bergen stated the project is moving forward and possible locations are being reviewed. One possible City-owned site is near the Jean Duluth soccer fields. A site survey is being conducted with hope of bringing schematics to the August meeting.

B. Ongoing Maintenance of Duluth's parks, playgrounds, public gardens and trails

President Hall wants to begin a discussion concerning the future of on-going maintenance. He's interested in forming an ad-hoc committee to work with user groups and others to dig into this issue.

Councilor Sipress noted one issue is Park Maintenance is not part of the Parks Division making it difficult for Council to delve into budget details of separate divisions. Current Administration has put more emphasis on maintenance than previous ones.

Mr. Filby Williams stated in addition to funding, there is an organization issue. Park Maintenance exists in another division resulting in improper alignment. The City is having ongoing discussions about this. The Mayor will submit a 2016 budget plan to supplement park funding to meet unmet priorities. There is potential to go beyond the Parks Fund to meet needs. One possibility is to add some of the tourism tax contributions to the Parks Fund, which has remained flat. Tourism tax revenues grow each year by \$500,000. People overwhelmingly come to Duluth for waterfront parks, but these amenities do not get proportionate support from tourism tax dollars.

8. OLD BUSINESS

A. Future of Lake Superior Zoo and Fairmount Park

Ms. Bergen read an email from the Lake Superior Zoological Society Board regarding ongoing meetings within the Society to develop a workable solution between the Zoo and the City.

Zoo Society Board Member, Toni Fladmark-Foster, is chairing the planning committee and wants to come up with good ideas for the Zoo and working with the City.

Councilor Sipress stated the City owns the Zoo and contracts with Lake Superior Zoological Society to deliver services. He believes the only way forward is a path together.

President Hall developed a resolution to determine costs of updating current Zoo facilities. His intent was not for a vote on this today, but wants this issue to remain front and center. He wants to raise this issue for discussion because we need to know what these costs are going forward.

Councilor Sipress would like to delay this study for a little while, until the Society and City process advances more.

Mr. Filby Williams appreciates that the Zoo Society is moving quickly and meeting regularly to develop a vision. There are a number of time sensitive funding opportunities within the next 60 days:

1. HUD Disaster Resiliency Grant
2. 2016 bonding session – until clarity is achieved, the City can't include this on their priority list
3. The pending settlement for damage to Stryker Bay superfund site could have benefits for the Zoo.

Mr. Filby Williams stated that any and all plans submitted will be subject to a full and rigorous assessment of costs and called for neither party to fall into the temptation to reduce the plan to exclude parts of property. Plans need to include all of Fairmount Park. Need to position ourselves to be able to bridge gaps to include meaningful compromises on each side. Need to think ahead about what we are willing to accept. City wants to increase access to and through Fairmount Park and improve financial sustainability of the Zoo.

B. Chester Cell Tower Update

Basically complete. Now need to let things grow. The landscape contractor is watering and monitoring for a year. City staff spent an enormous amount of time addressing citizen concerns about this project.

C. Wheeler Cell Tower Update - Nothing new to report

D. Wolves within Duluth neighborhoods and DNR policy - Nothing new to report

E. St Louis River Corridor Projects Update

Current staffing is not sufficient to manage the current workload. Administration is working on options to address this issue.

In order to share more information, individual pages for each project are being developed for the Parks website.

9. DIVISION MANAGER'S REPORT

Nothing additional to report

10. ADJOURNMENT

Move to adjourn meeting at 7:45 pm by Commissioner Schmidt, second by President Hall.

11. NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, August 12 at 5 pm at Central Hillside Center

MOTIONS

1. MINUTES

A. Approval of June 4, 2015 minutes of the special meeting regarding the future of Fairmount Park and the Lake Superior Zoo. Moved by Commissioner Albright, second by Commissioner Welles. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Approval of June 10, 2015 regular meeting minutes. Moved by Commissioner Welles, second by Commissioner Schraepfer. Motion passed unanimously

2. DULUTH CHILDREN'S OUTDOOR CHARTER

WHEREAS: The City of Duluth has established itself as a national leader for outdoor recreation infrastructure by leveraging private and public investments in our parks and trails

WHEREAS: The City of Duluth, through its Parks Division, has a role in ensuring all of our citizens have access and opportunities to programming that facilitates outdoor recreation within our community's parks, trails, and natural areas.

WHEREAS: An "adventure gap" exists throughout our nation and within The City of Duluth which denies many youth experiences in nature that can develop character, enhance learning, strengthen connection to community, and create a sense of wonder and curiosity for the world around them.

WHEREAS: Partnerships between The City of Duluth, schools, non-profit organizations, private businesses and citizen groups can help address and reduce the outdoor adventure gap when they are guided by an articulated set of values and goals

THEREFORE: The Duluth Parks Commission strongly supports the Children's Outdoor Charter and encourages the Duluth City Council to consider and pass the Charter as a document to guide programming partnerships within our community.

Commissioner Albright motioned for approval, second by Commissioner Wodash. Motion passed unanimously.