



PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of June 15, 2016

Council Chambers
City Hall – 411 W 1 St.



1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:00 pm.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Patrick Contardo, Erik Torch, John Schmidt, Tjaard Breeuwer, Ed Hall, Michael Schraepfer, Jon Welles, Jodi Tervo Roberts, Amanda Crosby, Tiersa Wodash

NOT PRESENT: Commissioner Albright

Also present: Joel Sipress

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Contardo motioned for approval of the May 11 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Schmidt. Unanimously approved.

4. Presentations

Ed Hall introduced new commissioner Jodi Roberts, who spoke briefly.

A. St. Louis River Corridor Initiative Update– Lindsay Dean, Manager and Lisa Luukkala, Project Coordinator (informational)

Lindsay Dean: Many of you were there at the 6/13 meeting, so we're doing an abbreviated version, starting at Section III Mayor Larson's vision. The full presentation can be found here:

<http://www.duluthmn.gov/media/506076/St-Louis-River-Corridor-Presentation-June-2016-.pdf>

Lisa Luukkala: Major component has been engaging the community. Parks is engaging citizens early and often. This is a new focus in Parks and Rec, having staff who focus solely on planning, design and construction of projects. Community focus makes this team unique. For example, there have been 21 city led public meetings, 72 meetings with neighborhood groups, etc. Over 50 user groups have come together to work on one or more projects. Fundraising goals, lofty goal of \$32 M in outside funding. \$15M awarded to date. About one-third of project proposals already received.

Three community partners that have really stepped up.

1. GND Rec Area. Included not just site but also vibrant community programming. To date GND has raised over \$700K. Goal is to complete Phase I in 2016.

2. DXC is about to launch public fundraising plan for the Grand Ave. Nordic Center. Project is pending completion of EAW. DXC committed to \$500K. Phase I includes 2.2 KM of lit ski trails and consistent snow cover for one of Minnesota's most beloved sports.

3. Duluth Traverse was a priority of 2011 Trails Plan. Completed 75% of trail in 5 years, will be at 85% at end of 2016. COGGS has raised \$400,000, and contributes 4000 hours a year in volunteer time.

Featured projects:

- Cross City Trail. City did Master Plan after Phase I already complete. Turnout demonstrated



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public interest was high. Very strong public engagement this year, including stakeholder and public meetings. Closing the gap between Carlton St. and Greene St through what is now known as the River Route. In the end, trail will connect Lakewalk with Munger Trail. Pursuing funding change to move funds meant for Spirit-Zoo to focus now on the Carlton/Greene Gap.

- Lincoln Park is one of our most historic and urban parks. Has experienced a lot of damage from 2012 flood and public use. MMP calls for restoring pavilion, building new playground away from traffic, considering changing upper parkway into Bike/Ped pathway. Phase I in 2017 partially funded through half and half, also US Bank funds. Lincoln Park is one of two state nominees for potential NPS grants.
- Neighborhood parks. Mayor has increased allocation to \$1.2 M. with a fixed total of \$90,000 per park. This requires pledge/donations of \$10,000. City will support groups that want to raise more, including by organizing neighborhood service days. Neighborhood parks MMPs for neighborhood parks in plan. These first Phase I projects should be achievable and affordable.
- Western Waterfront Trail restoration and extension. Vision is a 12 mile trail through restored natural habitat. WWFT mini master plan is about to get underway, including future of city owned waterfront adjacent to US Steel, including Slag Point. Also WWFT will be a "heritage trail". WWFT always connected to access to natural waterfront. To complete this trail we must also complete protection of the land and waterfront. The land is too steep or too wet to be developed. Current management plan is that there is none, no guiding principle for management. Now entering 18 month public process, anticipated that Council would review a nomination in late 2016, management plan by 2017.

Lindsay Dean: Update on 2016 construction in the corridor: 17 miles of Duluth Traverse; Cross City trail from I-35 to zoo, WWFT, Lincoln Park, Chambers Grove, FEMA work on DWP, GLRI grant for DWP roundhouse site.

Ed Hall: Very comprehensive reallocation of funding priorities, resetting of priorities, a lot of progress. Wants to commend Larson for taking this aggressively to the next stage.

Tiersa Wodash: How many miles of WWFT trail? Lisa Luukkala: Plan called for 12 miles in 1979. Planning through December looking at extension to Chambers Grove. Wodash: No trails mapped out as of yet? Lisa: Correct

Jody Tervo Roberts: How do you plan to reach out to neighborhood groups about the new funding options? Lisa: Starting outreach to CC's now, letters to Club presidents. Once MMP is approved, we can help groups with their fundraising goals.

Ed Hall: This funding increase is one of the best things I've seen in a long time. The money is there and work will begin this summer. Other things we've approved take longer. By the end of this year we'll have seen significant progress in 11 parks.

Tjaard Breeuwer: What restoration at DWP roundhouse? Lindsay: 26 acres, Business Development got grant, clean fill, invasive removal, native species planted. Where is it? Near Polk Street (Mike Casey from audience)

Erik Torch: Any negative feedback on funding reallocations? Lindsay: worked with groups ahead

of time. Lisa, for example, DWP with multiple groups needing to cross creeks on aging railroad trestle. To afford this, shifting funds from single user groups to projects like bridges for all user groups.

Ed Hall: Councilor Sipress raised issue of staff resources at City Council meeting. This train is moving out with a lot of cars behind it. We are behind you to make sure you have the resources.

Joel Sipress: Also concerned about staff stress and strain and potential burnout. If we do reach a point that the pace we're on is not sustainable...community outreach, working with consultants...maybe we all step back to be sure we're on a sustainable path.

Erik Torch: Make a **motion** that the Parks & Recreation Commission supports the reallocation of ½ and ½ tax funds for the St. Louis River Corridor as proposed by Mayor Larson. Second by Schmidt. Ed Hall asked if members of the public wanted to speak on that. There were none. Motion passed unanimously.

Patrick Contardo: Is there a means to protect city-owned lands from development or inappropriate development. Lindsay Dean: that is covered by the DNAP, and will be addressed in the Comprehensive Plans. Contardo: years from now when population reaches 300,000, how will we have protected open space? Joel Sipress: One of the big issues discussed in Council regarding the comp plan is how we protect green spaces. Something new in the zoning code, for conservation land, but similar to P-1 land. Important that Parks Commission be part of discussion of conservation zoning.

B. Neighborhood Parks Mini-Master Plans - Lisa Luokkala, Project Coordinator (action requested)

Lisa Luokkala: We presented at the April Parks Commission meeting a draft of St. Louis River Corridor MMP for eleven neighborhood parks along corridor. Took feedback from commissioners. Made some minor tweaks based on feedback, including reliance on Parks Master Plan. Routine maintenance will be done by City, but bigger repairs will require link to Parks and Rec master Plan and guiding hub model instilled in plan.

Tonight asking that Commission move forward with approval of River Corridor Parks MMPs. With that, we will work with community groups to submit project proposals, including volunteer labor projects. Anticipate most projects happening in 2017-18.

Erik Torch: Policy on remodeling or rebuilding, is that city-wide? Lisa: Parks Master plan highlighted buildings we intend to maintain buildings in "Hubs" that we would continue to maintain. Other buildings will require a community partner to step up.

Ed Hall: Historical Park, made a reference to archeological survey. Has that been completed? Lisa Luokkala: Yes: HPC completed Phase I analysis, available on city website now. Working with that commission before proceeding on this site.

Ed Hall: Purple land and land to the east of Fond du Lac Park. No reference to anything planned for that park: Lisa Luokkala: It's passive green space and will remain so.



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Ed Hall: Blackmer Park on 2-18. Reference to \$50K for fishing pier. Not clear the way it's numbered. Is it the same as river access railroad crossing? Related? Not anticipated to be a kayak launch at this time. Confusing. Lisa Luukkala: Will be further vetted in WWFT planning process. This is a placeholder for fishing pier discussed at community meeting. Will make notation to make this document accurate.

Ed Hall: On page 2-27, Riverside, talk of removing existing building and building new basketball court and building new with restroom facility. But also plan for port-a-potties on page 2-28. Lisa Luukkala: as cited on 2-28, Will make adjustment to map to say "remove existing building and build new shelter."

Joel Sipress: Re Historical Park 2-2, about a month ago Council received excellent presentation from Indigenous commission about ethnographic study. Might we add to this that ethnographic study and include in this section? Lisa Luukkala: We can definitely explore adding that language and committing to consulting with Indigenous Commission.

Ed Hall asked if there were comments from members of the public.

Mike Casey: 12 parks listed on this sheet (handout provided for media). 13 parks to be funded.

Lisa: Smithville Park will get modest improvements, funded through WWFT process. The parks to get the \$90K are listed somewhere? Lisa, on the website.

Mike: How will public process to decide rail/rail-trail/trail work? Lisa: Just engaging our consultants right now, anticipate public process this fall.

Motion to approve the St. Louis River Corridor Neighborhood Parks Mini-Master Plans as presented. Moved by Erik Torch. John Schmidt seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

C. Update on the Lakewalk Extension Project – Joel Sipress and Lindsay Dean (informational)

Sipress: Going all the way back, historically it had been industrial land. When city began planning in 1990s, city vision called for waterfront trail all through Water Street area. Unfortunately, decisions made regarding Beacon Pointe eliminated chance to do actual 10-12 foot wide trail. Contentious discussion, but did accomplish pedestrian path in front of Ledges. Everything else ground to a halt.

Council established task force a couple of years ago, Sipress as liaison. Maximum reasonable public access to the water put taking into account neighbors who now live in these structures. Showed image of pedestrian only trail from west of Beacon Pointe all the way to reconnect with Lakewalk east of the ledges. Pedestrian only, permeable pavers, with privacy screening especially for neighbors at The Point Condominiums. Parks Commission endorsed it, and sent to Council, who endorsed it and asked City to conduct feasibility study on preferred option. LHB did study last year, then provided its findings to City.

LHB report: Purpose was to study and determine feasibility. Key objective: Can an economical ADA accessible path be made? Pinch point right at eastern edge of where city easement drops into gulch. 20-page report, but bottom line: Preferred alignment appears to be feasible. Need soil

studies, but it's feasible. 5-ft wide trail (consistent with ADA guidelines). One County tax forfeit parcel and one privately held parcel in corridor. Cost estimates; Permeable pavers \$1.548M, crushed limestone \$1.372 M. City budget could sustain a local match, but not full cost. Good news is that recommended option is feasible.

Lindsay Dean: Next steps. Will include Lakewalk Master Planning in 2017 budget, to kick off in 2017. Friends of the Lakewalk has been important partner (shout-out to audience). Plan will address commercial event use of the Lakewalk, maintenance, connectivity, signage, safety and rules. To be submitted to GMRPTC for Legacy designation.

Erik Torch: Is there some kind of deadline for easement? Sipress: No there is not. Easement required to do this is with condo association and is in perpetuity for a trail or a path. LHB determined that there is no construction easement along Beacon Pointe. There was a construction easement along Ledges, which sunsets in 2017. Council is on record against multiuse trail there.

Tiersa Wodash: Plans to deal with private property along shore? Sipress: In the absence of that property, project doesn't really make sense. The Hayden property for example. Whole recommendation is dependent on this. Property owners have long been aware of City's interest. No formal conversations have been held, because it would be premature.

Ed Hall: Any members of the public want to speak? None

5. Commission Committees

A. Parks and Facilities – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Michael Schraepfer – Jon Welles, Ed Hall, John Schmidt, [Dale Sellner]

No update.

B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Ed Hall – John Schmidt, Patrick Contardo, [Lindsay Dean]

No update.

C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Tom Albright - Andy Holak, Tiersa Wodash, Art Johnston, Tjaard Breeuwer, [Judy Gibbs]

No update.

D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult) – meeting date: TBA

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

No update.

6. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Contardo reports he has tendered his resignation due to moving out of town for retirement.

Pleasure to see the engagement of everyone. Makes Duluth a wonderful place to live. Will be at August meeting.

7. New Business

No new business to discuss.

8. Old Business

A. Update on Clean & Green volunteer initiative

Lindsay Dean: Cheryl Skafte, our Volunteer Coordinator, is leading four volunteer initiatives. One of the initiatives is called Clean & Green. Groups and individuals helped remove unwanted trash from our parks and trails, as well as contributed to beautification projects like weeding in the Rose Garden and mulching trees in various neighborhood parks. 2015 Clean and Green accomplishments include 3,185 hours of service and 5,953 pounds of bagged garbage collected.

Bill Lynch spoke from the public, wondering why Duluth is one of only cities that does not require garbage pick-up. If there were a requirement, might reduce illegal dumping.

B. Update on Lake Superior Zoo

Lindsay reported on the Lake Superior Zoo and Fairmount Park. The City and the Lake Superior Zoological Society have a new ten year management agreement, approved by the City Council. The Zoo is currently going through the AZA accreditation process. City staff are meeting with AZA accreditation staff on Thursday.

9. Public Comments

Mike Casey: Trails group from the former RCC will continue to exist, with Mike as chair. They will do events and advocate for good public process, especially with WWFT. They're working on a name and welcome suggestions.

10. Division Manager's Report

A. Pontliana Woods is county-owned tax forfeit land on Park Point that has not been developed and is deeply valued by residents for ecological purposes. Parks Commission and City Council passed a resolution on 9/14 requesting St. Louis County work with the City to preserve Pontliana Woods. The land is currently not up for sale and we're continuing to work with the County on a land swap.

11. Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned.

12. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held 5 pm, Wednesday, July 13 in Council Chambers (City Hall).