



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of November 9, 2016

City Hall – Council Chambers
411 West 1st Street



I. Call Meeting to Order

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

II. Roll Call

Present: Ed Hall, Amanda Crosby, Dean Vogtman, Tjaard Breeuwer, Erik Torch, Michael Schraepfer, John Schmidt, Jodi Tervo Roberts, Jon Welles, Tiersa Wodash

III. Approval of Previous Meetings' Minutes

Commissioner Torch motioned for approval of October 12, 2016 meetings minutes; second by Commissioner Crosby. Unanimously approved.

IV. Presentations

A. St. Louis River Water Trail Plan – Hansi Johnson, Minnesota Land Trust (informational)

Mr. Johnson, Director of Recreation and Lands, Minnesota Land Trust provided an introduction to the St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail master plan, noting that after the 64-page plan is described they will open the floor for discussion.

Johnson: Provided context of the river explaining its span from Chambers Grove all the way to the Bong Bridge/US-2, noting it was once a biologically rich and diverse area that Native Americans depended on which later saw French Fur traders in the 1640s, then logging which increased board feet coming through the river thereafter. Explained that the river is still sustaining the people in the area and there is a deep love for it, however it was left deeply polluted from this industrial influence. The following points regarding the trail plan were brought to attention:

- Emphasis on the continual restoration and clean-up and the importance of designating it as a National Water Trail to help rebrand the river as a destination
- Importance of paddling in promoting diversity as the river is most popular now with motorized users, however 26,000 people in the community own kayaks or canoes
- Water Trail is not regulatory and unlike the Boundary Waters Canoe area is a water version of a hiking trail, with maps and informational signage used to create communication amongst users of the river
- River Trails Conservation Association runs the program who provided an in-kind grant to provide technical assistance from Randy Thoreson and designation by the Secretary of the Interior
- Designation as a Water Trail provides National standing and respect as there are currently only 13 in the Nation
- Would increase our score on grant applications and provide more leverage for future funding and further river restoration and clean-up

Johnson: Explained the Master Plan fits the criteria for application to the National Water Trail and is multijurisdictional. Noted the application is due April 1st, 2017 and that the planning group is working to build a River Committee or "Friends of..." group. Emphasized the complexity of this project and



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how the public is playing a very constructive role in the process, noting that despite the plans emphasis on paddling it really touches multiple users of the river, like Duluth Power Squadron and Twin Ports Walleye Association. The Master Plan was outlined and presented in the following order:

- Leadership team, key stakeholder and project partner groups were named
- Background and purpose provided
- Brief history
- Key considerations, including economic implications of outdoor experience
- New paddling communities described (stand-up paddle and kayak fisherman)
- Collaboration between motorized and non-motorized users described
- Research, mapping and analysis (how information was gathered before the visioning phase)
- Public meeting process in Duluth and Superior, including public comment period
- Water Trails best practices described
- Mission statement
- Recreational goals
- Maps explanation and multiple zone identification (Red River Slough, Big Open Water, etc.)
- Types of paddlers (exercise-orientated, comfort-orientated)
- Trail planning for varying degrees of experience level/abilities
- Site design, rest stops, portages and basic infrastructure
- Programming goals
- Educational goals (creating connection to the river and keeping partners involved)
- Restoration and conservation goals (cleaned by 2025)
- Community support, how to get people involved and collaborate across state lines (Duluth and Wisconsin)
- Public information and dissemination goals (mapping, social media engagement, etc.)
- Access and signage plans

Johnson: Explained that the next phase is about implementation and more detailed planning. Opened the floor for discussion and questions.

Hall: Questioned if it was referred to the Trails Committee first.

Breeuwer: Explained the Trails Committee reviewed the plan after public comments were received to ensure the plan was well-written and integrated public comments.

Vogtman: Expressed the excitement this brings for people outside the area, questioning if there were any statistics on what type of money this could bring to the area for paddling.

Hansi Johnson: Confirmed that page 9 speaks to the number of people locally and visiting and what percentage of those are paddlers.

Crosby: Thanked Mr. Johnson.

Wodash: Shared that she was part of the planning committee, emphasizing how thorough it was but questioned whether if after the designation a more robust plan with locations would be available.



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Torch: Questioned what resources would they have access to after the designation for Water Trail, noting state coordinator Eric Reid's participation and potential future grant opportunities. Also questioned if the \$75,000 noted on page 48 of the plan should really be \$750,000.

Tervo Roberts: Requested information on what the connection between the Lake Superior Water Trail and the St. Louis River Plan was.

Hansi Johnson: Shared there was concern from Port Authority about paddling in the port zone, however an emergency stop at the Bong Bridge and refraining from promoting too much paddling in an active harbor zone were noted.

Schmidt: Expressed liking for the educational goals as there are many people in the city who stand at the shoreline but have no way of getting out on the water and this encourages their voices being heard.

Hall: Requested that the organizations in support and noted on page 51 should be on the record.

Hansi Johnson: Explained the Leadership Team and Key Stakeholders are both willing to write letters of support and could be potential members of the River Committee we'd like, which would be a coalition of sorts to move forward.

Hall: It should be made clear that these groups not only participated but are in support.

Hansi Johnson: Agreed that the letters of support are important as they prove a network of "friends of" groups.

Hall: Questioned what the role of the River Committee would be.

Hansi Johnson: Explained that after the plan is approved they will work on getting a group together to move forward in the application process.

Hall: Emphasized how he would appreciate an update once the River Committee gets going and noted the importance of strong language in regards to site maintenance in the plan.

Hansi Johnson: Agreed that it was important and could improve going forward.

Elaina (Northland Paddlers Board Member): Questioned if the Western Waterfront Trail was part of this plan.

Hansi Johnson: Explained the WWFT plan is cited as a spot for details on Paddle Center.

Elaina (Northland Paddlers Board Member): Requested information on the River Committee and when it would meet if the plan passed.



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Hansi Johnson: Explained it would meet after work hours. He also noted the Mississippi trail, which runs from St. Cloud to Hastings and how they're using Nice Ride bikes to do shuttles for rental boats, the only program of its kind in the country, sharing the possibilities with bike path or train in our area. Further noted the Rock River Trail in southern Wisconsin as an example.

Breeuwer: Explained that the committee believes this is an application for National Water Trail designation and the Paddle Center is not essential to that and should stay separate, noting that tying the Water Trail plan to the Paddle Center or the WWFT would be counterproductive.

B. St. Louis River Corridor Trails Plan – Andrew Slade, Parks and Recreation (informational)

Mr. Slade, Parks & Recreation Assistant Manager, City of Duluth provided a brief presentation on the St. Louis River Corridor Trails plan.

Slade: Informed that the Trails Committee and Commission have reviewed the plan in depth and a few extra details are being added to insure it links to other plans already in existence.

Hall: Questioned if any new initiatives that are specifically recommended in this plan were added.

Slade: Explained that fundamentally the purpose of the plan has been to sum up existing plans that have already been approved by the Parks Commission and City Council and how this plan finds ways to link trails that run through the SLRC and make sure the uses complement each other. Noted the intent is to have the Park Commission vote on the plan in December.

Hall: Requested that the restoration of old trails and reroutes be clearly articulated in the plan.

Slade: Confirmed they will be included.

C. 2016 Fall Community Parks & Recreation Program Grants – Lindsay Dean, Parks and Recreation Manager (action requested)

Ms. Dean, Parks & Recreation Manager, City of Duluth explained the background on the Parks Fund grant selection process and its purpose of administering \$50,000 in neighborhood grants both in the spring and fall to support neighborhood groups.

Dean: Explained the projects must take place in Duluth parks system and support the divisions mission, and that grant requestors must be designated as a 501c3 organization. Further explained they received 11 applications this grant round and after the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation performed due diligence the city reviewed the project proposals and finally a Selection Committee provided the following recommendations:

- Chester Bowl Improvement Club - purchase of helmets: Committee recommended \$5000
- COGGS- Duluth traverse maintenance: Committee recommended \$5000
- Duluth Climbers Coalition – community days: Committee recommended \$4800
- Friends of Dog Park – Water infrastructure at Keene Creek: Project did not move forward



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- because lack of renewed agreement with MN DOT who owns land.
- GND Development Alliance – Sports Court: Project did not move forward because lack of secured funding.
 - GND Development Alliance – Community Garden: Committee recommended \$5000
 - Hartley Nature Center – education and awareness programming: Committee recommended \$5000
 - Lincoln Park Business Group – corner park rejuvenation: Committee recommended \$5000
 - Neighbors of Lower Chester Park – community use improvements: Committee recommended \$4300 for indoor facility plans not no new infrastructure.
 - Wheels on Trails – grassy point rehabilitation: Project did not move forward because of current mini-master plan work
 - YMCA of Duluth- outdoor collaborative: Committee recommended \$5000

Dean: Noted that 11 applications is considerably low compared to past grant rounds and going forward increased outreach will be important. Explained the Selection Committee's recommendations totaled \$39,100 and the remaining funds would be carried over to the next grant round in Spring 2017.

Tervo Roberts: Requested information about ongoing maintenance costs and how the COGGS grant fits that.

Dean: Explained that COGGS has not received funding for a few grant rounds, and the Committee felt it was appropriate.

Denette Lynch (public): Requested that city work closer with user groups as Friends of Dog Parks have twice been encouraged to apply for funds for water and then denied due to the lack of an agreement in place with MnDOT, noting two grant cycles have been wasted for the group.

MOTION/Second: Schmidt/Vogtman to approve the funding recommendations. **VOTE: (9-0)**

Schraepfer: Questioned if the dog park will be given an opportunity to apply for two grants given the fact they've missed two rounds.

Dean: Explained that the program guidelines allow grant awards up to \$5,000. There is no policy against awarding a group funding for more than 1 project. There have been groups who have applied for two grants, but the Selection Committee has never granted funding for more than one project.

Schraepfer: Expressed concern that the problem was the groups fault.

Hall: Requested information on when the MN DOT agreement be reached and if soon whether this application could come back to the Parks Commission.

Dean: Expressed her concerns of an "off-cycle" award. The grant selection process is well-defined with DSACF and has many phases of review and approval.



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Torch: Questioned if resources are available to organization that will help them understand the logistics and potential road blocks.

Dean: Confirmed Parks & Recreation is available to talk with organizations.

V. Commission Committees

- A. Parks and Facilities – meeting date: TBA
Chair - Michael Schraepfer – Jon Welles, Ed Hall, John Schmidt [Dale Sellner]
- B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: 11/17 at 12:00pm in the Parks office
Chair – Ed Hall – John Schmidt, Amanda Crosby [Lindsay Dean]
- C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: 11/2 at 6:30pm
Chair – Tjaard Breeuwer– Tiersa Wodash, Jodi Tervo Roberts, Art Johnston, Mike Casey, Eric Viken, Shawna Mullen [Judy Gibbs]

A recommendation that Shawna Mullen be added to the group was shared.

MOTION/Second: Breeuwer/Tervo Roberts to approve adding Ms. Mullin as Trails and Bikeways Committee member.

- D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult) – meeting date: TBA
Chair - Jon Welles – Jodi Tervo Roberts, Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby [Pamela Page]

VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

No reports

VII. New Business

- A. YMCA True North AmeriCorps Program – Lindsay Dean

Dean: Explained that the Parks Fund spends \$250,000 annually on youth programs. \$100,000 goes to 5 youth-serving organizations in the City (\$20,000 each) and \$150,000 goes to the YMCA's True North AmeriCorps program. These agreements run through end of 2017. For the next agreement with the YMCA, Parks & Recreation has requested specific changes with the YMCA, which resulted in a Council Resolution in October to increase the focus of the grant on youth development and outdoor programming.

Dean read resolution: *Resolution of support for the City of Duluth's preliminary three-year commitment to provide funding to the Duluth Area Family YMCA for the True North AmeriCorps program to provide youth development programming for a maximum annual amount not to exceed \$120,000, and a total amount not to exceed \$360,000.*

Wodash: Asked what the age range is.

Dean: Shared that True North focuses on Elementary School children. All ISD 709 elementary schools have at least 1 True North AmeriCorps member.



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Wodash: Requested more information on what types of outdoor activities they would provide and whether they would require gear, like kayaks for example.

Dean: Explained there will be a low gear requirement. The Duluth YMCA and the Duluth Outdoor Collaborative are creating outdoor lesson plans for the members to easily implement in their respective agencies/schools.

Wodash: Questioned if there will be a cost to the kids at all and if there are scholarships available.

Dean: Confirmed that some agencies like Key Zone have a fee associated with it. However, each site offers scholarships. She explained that few people know the program exists and they need to make it more visible so we can get more kids involved.

Torch: Described that this is part of the federal funding program and that it is a match that releases federal funds which allows youth agencies to get additional support for fundraising and provide for staff persons.

Hall: Explained that this is Parks Fund monies and should therefore be used for those purposes.

Tervo Roberts: Requested attention back to the Water Trail coalition planning and shared that this is a great opportunity for youth from Valley Youth Center to be on the River Committee.

Dean: Agreed that it was a great idea.

VIII. Old Business

A. Update on Grant Awards and Applications – Andrew Slade

Slade: Explained this information was brought to City Council as part of budget presentation with \$1.1 million received in grants for parks and trails project, while another \$1 million in grant applications is outstanding. Further explained the groups hopefulness for the NPS grant for Lincoln Park in the amount of \$750,000 to fund Phase 1 improvements. Described there are a number of other grant applications that are pending, such as the Knight Cities Challenge that was recently announced and two applications for the Duluth Traverse and for Central Hillside Park. Explained the group is currently identifying 2017 grant applications, working with consultant grant writer Christine Penney.

B. Update on Storm Cleanup – Andrew Slade

Slade: Confirmed the ski trails at Hartley have been finished and opened and the clean-up has shifted to Lester Park, both ski trails and snowmobile trails to Martin Road, hoping for November 15th for the core ski trails at Lester Park being opened.

C. Update on St. Louis River Corridor & Neighborhood Park Plans- Andrew Slade



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Hall: Thanked Slade for the SLRC summary and tour.

Slade: Shared that the group had a tour of the Corridor with three park commissioners last week noting GND Recreation center's celebration on 11/10/16 marking the completion of Phase 1 of the Mini-master plan.

IX. Division Manager's Report

No report

X. Public Comment

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned. Moved by Torch, second by Crosby.

XII. Next meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday December 14, 2016 at 5pm in the City Council Chambers.