



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of January 11, 2017

City Hall – Council Chambers
411 W 1st St



I. Call Meeting to Order

President Hall called the meeting to order at 5:05pm.

II. Roll Call

Present: Ed Hall, John Schmidt, Amanda Crosby, Tjaard Breeuwer, Michael Schraepfer, Erik Torch, Dean Vogtman, JC Welles, Tiersa Wodash, Joel Sipress (City Council Liaison)

III. Approval of Previous Meetings' Minutes

Commissioner Torch motioned for approval of December 14, 2016 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Vogtman. Unanimously approved.

IV. Presentations

- A. Update from Neighborhood Youth Services – Princess Kisob, Ron Regal, and Tom Burns, Neighborhood Youth Services (informational)

Lindsay Dean presented members of NYS to Commissioners, noting their importance to the City of Duluth. Informed group that Tom Burns and Ron Regal often attend Parks Commission meetings as volunteers for League of Women Voters.

Ms. Kisob, Program Director, Neighborhood Youth Services (NYS) provided an informational presentation about NYS and its relationship to the City of Duluth.

Kisob: Described briefly the history of NYS, noting its opening in 1992 thanks to Chief Lyons, Judge Haney and others, with the mission to keep youth out of the juvenile justice system. Shared that the organization served 735 youth at the Washington Center last year, of which 80% self-identified as youth of color. Shared that many of their programs are funded by the City of Duluth, and a staff of seven plus a group of volunteers supports the organization.

Burns: Discussed the various ways they incorporate outdoor activities into their programming:

- Raised bed gardens at Washington Center (youth plant, harvest and maintain and all produce used for meals onsite)
- Partnership with Hartley Park, allows youth time at the playscape
- Visits to Aquarium
- UMD kayak/canoe trip at Park Point
- Bicycling the Lakewalk with the YMCA
- Visits to Cascade Park

Transportation is made possible with their 15 passenger van.

Burns: Informed group that one challenge is providing quality shoes for youth as they often don't want to get theirs dirty, or don't have ones good for hiking. Explained they are asking Goodwill for shoes that could be loaned, such as bowling shoes. Shared new initiatives for NYS:



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- Grant proposal with Hawk Ridge that would allow joint funding for programs and binoculars
- 4-H club starting this January
- Pollinator garden in partnership with Wild Ones, on 3rd Street where space is too steep for regular gardens.

Burns: Encouraged Commissioners to look at the 2014 MMP for Central Hillside Park and take a site visit, taking into consideration their hopes for more nature within this part of the neighborhood. Shared hopes to take youth to Enger Tower, as many may have never seen the view of Duluth from above.

Kisob: Duluth's Outdoor Charter challenges us to get children to experience the outdoors in multiple ways.

Burns: Expressed their excitement about the program and shared, "we love our kids".

Schmidt: Thanked members from NYS for the work they do, noting the profound effect and impact getting youth outside and building relationships will have on their lives. Noted that it's often forgotten that some may be uncomfortable outdoors, reiterating the Mayor's challenge in reaching all in our community.

Torch: Thanked members from NYS for the work they do with youth in Hillside neighborhood, noting what great stewards they are of gardens and habitat as well as youth programming.

Crosby: Questioned what ages attend NYS?

Kisob: Confirmed ages range from 6-10.

Crosby: Expressed her excitement about 4-H as she was once an active member herself.

Tjaard: Shared the Commission's absence of a Recreation Professional and questioned if NYS had any suggestions. Invited NYS's input and point of view in future parks planning process.

Burns: Shared that as League of Women Voters observers, they take notes, but cannot comment at meetings.

Sipress: Thanked group for their work and presentation. Noted the Commission's vacancy for a Third District representative and the Mayor's vision to diversify boards and committees, making this a great opportunity for someone from a historically disadvantaged group.

Hall: Questioned Lindsay Dean about the status of Central Hillside Park.

Dean: Confirmed there is some money set aside for 2017, as well as community outreach which Andrew Slade will speak to later during the Parks Planning update.



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Hall: Commented that parks initiatives are funding dependent, but also require energy and vision.

Burns: Expressed their main need is transportation, such as a van NYS could utilize.

Hall: Commented that there are different ways to make this possible, like grant funds or used van donations.

Kisob: Expressed desire to show youth the different parks and places they could access even when they're not at the Washington Center.

Hall: Discussed potential for a van or bus that ran a regular route connecting people with parks.

B. 2017 Golf Budget – Gary Nelson, Billy Casper Golf (informational)

Hall: Noted the city went through a detailed evaluation of golf program and finances.

Mr. Nelson, General Manager of Duluth Golf, Billy Casper Golf outlined 2016 and the year ahead.

Nelson: Described the golf industries gradual decline over the last 15 years, noting anticipation for baby boomers to retire potentially resulting in an increase in sales. Explained that under Billy Casper Golf, numbers have improved since 2013, however 2016 was impacted largely by weather, with June, July and August witnessing heavy rainfall creating wet conditions. Shared that rounds of golf are down 6% for 2016, resulting in a loss of \$176,000. Described the pride they take in creating a quality user experience, noting customer service statistics are up and higher than the companies average. Noted the other shortfalls in 2016 were the irrigation system, buildings, and cart paths being in declining shape. Shared current 2017 budgets \$100,000 deficit and their goal to break even by considering the following potential options:

1. Status Quo
2. Combing two positions (Director of Sales and Director of Golf)
3. Set fixed opening and closing dates at Lester (prevent loss of ~600/day or \$80,000)
4. Close the lake 9 at Lester (unpopular holes, savings of \$21,000)
5. Close Lester altogether. (Upset committed users, savings of \$187,000)

Nelson: Confirmed in 2017, they will do option 2 and 3 which is a pretty conservative model they feel comfortable with, resulting in net proceeds of \$9,600.

Wodash: Questioned if winter opportunities existed.

Nelson: Explained they've looked into ski trails, however they are bad for the course and opening the clubhouse for Christmas parties isn't feasible.

Vogtman: Requested information on season pass costs.

Nelson: Informed passes are \$680 plus tax for adults for both courses, Senior passes are \$540, senior couples is \$980, and \$1050 for household passes.



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Vogtman: Questioned if they received any storm damage.

Nelson: Confirmed about \$50,000 in storm damage at Lester, and about two weeks of work to get courses back into shape. Explained the courses were opened two days after storm and only ½ of a percent of overall trees were lost.

Breeuwer: Expressed need for a surplus looking into the future to pay for golf deficit fund.

Hall: Questioned if there is flexibility to do capital improvement now, before the deficit fund is paid down.

Sipress: Informed that the contract doesn't specify a schedule for pay down.

Hall: Questioned what percentage of users are non-Duluthians.

Nelson: Shared that nothing specific is available, however they collect zip codes and he estimates about 5% are out of town players.

Schmidt: Thanked Casper Golf for reaching out to NYS for potential youth activity partnerships, and looks forward to follow-through on that. Shared that he's heard Enger is a great place to play and questioned if there was room for an increase in the food and beverage area.

Nelson: Replied that food and beverage is increasing, revenue per golfer is increasing, especially with liquor license for Lester Park.

Schmidt: Requested from Erik Birkeland whether the golf course is in the asset management system.

Birkeland: Confirmed no, as it is still under contract.

C. 2017 Parks & Facilities Budgets – Erik Birkeland and Lindsay Dean, City of Duluth (informational)

Ms. Dean, Parks and Recreation Manager, City of Duluth presented the parks and recreation budget, both operating and capital, confirming they were approved in December.

Dean: Displayed organization chart noting FTEs are the same as previous year; four in stewardship, three in programming, 2 in operations, two in administration. PowerPoint presentation was displayed listing the following:

- 2016 accomplishments
- Summary of estimated revenue by category
- Summary of proposed expenses by category (noting NYS as 1 of 5 organizations receiving programming support, both directly and through Americorps program)
- \$5.5 million on parks and trails capital projects (largest source ½ and ½ tourism tax, second is federal grants, third is state grants, fourth is parks fund). \$1.6 million for parks capital



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- specifically, \$3.9 million for trails
- Dean discussed challenges and opportunities moving into 2017

Hall: Shared excitement regarding the increase in activity but questioned how they predict to deal with work overload and stress factors in keeping new initiatives in place without additional staffing.

Dean: Confirmed this is a big challenge as there are many plans to implement, however the list of 2017 construction projects is being worked to a realistic list.

Hall: Expressed that with long-term capital maintenance costs, new initiative plans are developed and being sensitive to possibly saying no or putting projects on hold may be necessary.

Torch: Thanked Dean for the overview and hard work for planning the coming year. Questioned if other groups receiving parks funding like NYS could present in later months. Expressed desire to receive a more comprehensive update later in the year that takes a global view of how SLRC goals are being met.

Mr. Birkeland, Properties and Facilities Manager, City of Duluth introduced himself, his role in having Park Maintenance under him now, as well as a glimpse at 2016.

Birkeland: Displayed PowerPoint slides that highlighted the following:

- 2017 Facilities budget
- PFM organization chart
- 2016 accomplishments (facility assessment for all park facilities, new work order system, major energy plan for Mayor Larson implementing LED lights, electric vehicle charging by Endion Station)
- Increase in budget for payroll
- Current mostly reactive state in maintenance with hope to become more proactive (aging infrastructure)
- 2017 goals (strategic facility plan for all park facilities)

Birkeland: Shared information specific to Park Maintenance

- 2016 accomplishments (30% of park maintenance staff costs went into storm recover, 8450 cubic yards of debris)
- Budget has higher personal expenses versus PFM (person intensive division)

Wodash: Questioned which buildings are not occupied.

Birkeland: Shared that primarily pump houses and other utility buildings that don't have people in them like storage facilities, with Riverside being the only vacant building.

Wodash: Questioned if the 15 maintenance workers are year-round.

Birkeland: Confirmed, yes and used example of pruning trees in summer then shifting to snow removal in the winter.



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Schmidt: Pleased to see the forester position for the City on the horizon and would like remain in the know and notified if the Commissioners can help in any way.

Crosby: Questioned if that position was listed.

Birkeland: Shared that it's a question whether to make it a broader natural resource position that would include public outreach.

Vogtman: Expressed importance of this position especially with EAB on the horizon.

Birkeland: Shared that an interim contract with a forester until funding is determined may be the best approach.

Hall: Thanked Dean and Birkeland, while extending a thank you to their departments on behalf of Commission.

Breeuwer: Questioned if there had been consideration of storm damage environmental repairs like landslides.

Birkeland: Explained a 2012 FEMA project in Lincoln Park exists.

Denette Lynch (public): Requested more information about Brighton Beach project.

Dean: Explained it is a Lakewalk trail extension through Brighton Beach.

Lynch: Requested clarification if it was the one that goes through the trees.

Dean: Responded that this has not been determined and will be part of a greater public process incorporated into the Lakewalk Master Plan in 2017.

D. Signage & Wayfinding Plan – Andrew Slade, City of Duluth (informational)

Mr. Slade, Parks and Recreation Assistant Manager, City of Duluth provided update on Signage and Wayfinding plan.

Slade: Explained that this project has been an ongoing and deliberate process with the end goal to protect our facilities and improve public experience and safety. Described issues motivating this plan:

- Getting to parks and finding your way around
- Public safety (signage helps identify where someone is on trails if first responders called)
- Old signage creating confusion (pointing to wrong direction, unclear, etc.)
- Public desire for signage heard on daily basis
- Trail damage (plan includes gates to protect trails from damage)

Slade: Explained they've worked with a contractor, Visual Communications, on this project and gone



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through a very deliberate design process, meeting with many different groups, stakeholders and the public. Further explained that today is a preliminary presentation with hopes for final approval at the February Parks Commission meeting, before Council approval late February. Goals and considerations for signage described:

- New signs at Chambers Grove this spring/summer
- Design inspired by Duluth's landscape
- Monument signs to welcome you to parks, kiosk signs once in the park that include maps and helpful information, trail marker signs within trail systems, regulatory signs that describe appropriate trail uses (design will match across all sign types)
- GIS-based database will store sign location, specs, and design information

Slade: Shared desire to implement signage into linear parks which are heavy on wayfinding and mile marker signs, however this comes down to budgeting.

Breeuwer: Questioned how GIS data sharing works with private companies.

Slade: Explained they haven't thought about how to work with private companies yet, however they're excited to make it more available and want the public to be a source for this information.

Wodash: Expressed support in sharing this information broadly and questioned whether sharing regular updates whether paper or electronically has been considered.

Slade: Explained it's not feasible for staff to get out to every park to updates signs, but park partners like COGGS and DXC help disseminate information.

Vogtman: Questioned where public can get printed maps.

Slade: Confirmed the 2015 map supply is low, and the new 2017 maps will be printed and distributed in May 2017.

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: 1/19 at 12:00pm in the Parks office
Chair – Ed Hall John Schmidt, Amanda Crosby [Lindsay Dean]
- C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: 11/1 at 5:30
Chair – Tjaard Breeuwer– Tiersa Wodash, Jodi Tervo Roberts, Art Johnston, Mike Casey, Eric Viken, Shawna Mullen [Andrew Slade]
- 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

Councilor Sipress: Explained he was elected Duluth City Council President and will no longer serve on the Parks Commission. Thanked everyone, including Ed Hall for his leadership, and shared that



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he learned a lot and is impressed with the Commission's dedication. Informed that a new Council Liaison will be determined soon.

Hall: Noted Commission vacancies for Recreation Professional and Third District.

VII. New Business

A. Election of Officers

- President, Vice President, and Secretary

Hall: Nominated officers for services as follows: John Schmidt, President; Erik Torch, Vice President; Amanda Crosby, Secretary.

MOTION/Second: Breeuwer/Crosby to approve new officers. **Passed unanimously.**

- Parks Fund Grant Selection Committee
- Chester Creek Concert Series Selection Committee

Dean: Noted that this Committee selects the band line-up.

Crosby: Volunteered to be on Committee.

B. Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan

Dean: Informed Commission the plan had been passed by the Urban Forest Commission and City Council, offered a copy of the plan to anyone who hadn't received.

VIII. Old Business

A. Update on Grant Awards and Applications

B. Update on St. Louis River Corridor Plans & Upcoming Public Meetings

Slade: Described public outreach planned for the forthcoming MLK Day regarding Central Hillside Park.

IX. Division Manager's Report

X. Public Comment

Louise Levy: Expressed the benefit from the Commissions work and shared that she owns Levy Tree Care and is a member of arborist, chair elect of the Society of American Forestry Urban Forestry. Expressed desire for Duluth to address the vacant urban forestry position. Further expressed that although Duluth staff has a wealth of resources for trees, it's been coming up short lately, noticeably in the loss of Civic Center elm trees, sidewalk maintenance damaging roots, EAB plan taking 3 years to adopt. Encouraged Dean, Birkeland and Filby-Williams to hire an urban forester sooner than later.

John Schmidt: Discussed City Councils discussion around the EAB management plan and whether a city forester job came up.

Sipress: Confirmed they talked with Jim Filby-Williams about the positions importance and felt there was a sense of commitment in filling the position, however the timeline is up in the air as well as



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securing funding.

Wodash: Questioned if boulevard trees downtown fall under parks maintenance.

Dean: Confirmed yes.

Vogtman: Thanked Ms. Levy for sharing her concerns.

XI. **Adjournment**

Meeting adjournment. Moved by Breeuwer, second by Wodash.

XII. **Next meeting**

The next meeting will be Wednesday February 8, 2017 in the City Council Chambers.