



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of April 11, 2017.

City Hall – Mayor’s Reception Room 4th Floor
411 W 1st St



I. Public Review of final draft version of the Duluth Traverse Mini-Master Plan (5-6 pm)

General Information was made available from Jim Shoberg, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth and Consultants from Confluence, including displays and maps for public viewing.

II. Call Meeting to Order

President John Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

III. Welcome New Members

New Parks and Recreation Commissioners Dudley Edmondson and Kristin Bergerson were welcomed to the Commission.

IV. Roll Call

Present: John Schmidt, Tjaard Breeuwer, Erik Torch, Dean Vogtman, Dudley Edmondson, Kristin Bergerson, Art Johnston (ISD 709 School Board Liaison)

Absent: Amanda Crosby, Britt Rohrbaugh, Tiersa Wodash, Michael Schreapfer, Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison), Frank Jewell (St. Louis County Board Liaison)

V. Approval of Previous Meetings’ Minutes

Commissioner Breeuwer motioned for approval of March 8, 2017 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Vogtman. Unanimously approved.

Schmidt: Reviewed agenda and reserved additional comment period for public after presentation, requested each speaker limit their time to three minutes. Thanked everyone for their hard work and offered his expectation that everyone treats one another with dignity. Read aloud the mission statement of the Parks Division and Parks Commission.

VI. Presentations

- A. Final Draft of Duluth Traverse Trail Mini-Master Plan – Jim Shoberg, City of Duluth and Consultants, Confluence (action requested)

Mr. Shoberg, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth and Brad Aldrich with Confluence provided an introduction to the Mini-Master Plan, highlighting the Plan’s purpose and overall spirit of the Duluth Traverse Trail project.

Shoberg: Explained that the Plan is a 90-page document and the group will try to get through it in 15-20 minutes.



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Aldrich: Presented the Duluth Traverse Mini-Master Plan, highlighting the following key sections:

- **Vision Statement**
- **What is the Duluth Traverse** – spine trail, trail centers, skills area, bike park
- **Legacy Fund Classification** – regional significance and connectivity to significant sites like Hawk Ridge
- **Community Engagement** – two stakeholder meetings, open house at Denfeld High School, social pinpoint application, open dialogue with community and user groups, survey monkey public comment period
- **Results of Questionnaire** – 53% of commenters use the trail at least once a week, top value of trail is proximity to homes, neighborhood connectivity is important, top concerns were long term maintenance, crowding and access
- **Open House Priorities**
- **Guiding Principles** – long-term sustainability, educate all users, protection of the environment, equity and access, unique Duluth destination, foster partnerships and community
- **Overview of Trail Network**
- **Trail Development Policy** – language in Plan came after thorough discussion, which put a critical threshold on the miles developed after the original vision of 104 miles.
- **Mileage Chart** (review of numbers underway) – trail classifications and skill areas
- **History** – started in 1990s when biking was threatened, COGGS developed, City Master Plan 2011-2016, larger grant funding starting in 2012, 2016 Gold Level IMBA Ride Center
- **Related Planning Efforts** – traverse included in other plans including the Saint Louis River Corridor Trails Plan
- **Funding and Partners** – maintenance costs relative to paved trails and city streets
- **Development Plan** – neighborhood connectors, intercommunity connectors
- **Parking, Signage & Wayfinding**
- **Trail Issues** – environmental assessment issues, natural slumping at Mission Creek Forest Preserve, unique features at Magney-Snively and Hawk Ridge, trail corridor protection and boardwalk maintenance
- **Recommendations** – 11 miles of connectors, DWP section and social pinpoint comments
- **Budget Estimates** – review of potential funding sources
- **Next Steps and Research** – trail counts and ongoing maintenance plan

VII. Comments/Questions from Commissioners

Edmondson: Questioned what the Plan's definition of underserved is.

Shoberg: Responded that the Plan aims at creating access from as many neighborhoods to green spaces as possible, noting that Gary New Duluth was underserved due to a lack of trail access or trail corridor.

Schmidt: Agreed with Edmondson and shared that access doesn't guarantee the needs of all citizens are met. Mentioned the importance of programming and education.

Torch: Shared that the City, COGGS, and other youth agencies are looking at how to better provide



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access to the parks.

Schmidt: Questioned if there was a project with Lincoln Park Middle School.

Shoberg: Confirmed that there are plans to build a connector with Lincoln Park Middle School for students to utilize this spring, as well as roving bike fleets to be available. Noted one bike host site as the Duluth Area YMCA.

Bergerson: Shared that the middle schools are currently using bike fleets for bike safety.

Vogtman: Thanked group for their presentation and the professional, easy to read Mini-Master Plan. Shared with group that his first hike on the Traverse was last fall with his family where he noticed tons of bikes and people out in Fond du Lac. Noted the importance of educating users on the right of way, with clear communication at trailheads to avoid dangerous situations with fast speed bikers. Expressed how impressed he was with COGGS and questioned where they receive their funding.

Shoberg: Clarified that most COGGS funding is from private donations with some local business funding.

Edmondson: Requested clarification on hikers having the right of way even when on a trail purpose built for bikes.

Shoberg: Shared that best practices indicate giving the right of way to the most vulnerable users, noting however that education is necessary so users understand what type of experience they will have when on the trail.

Bergerson: Questioned if there were other super sidewalks besides Rice Lake Road.

Shoberg: Confirmed that there are technically no others as the Campus Connector, Cross City Trail in Lincoln Park, and the Lakewalk are not actually “Super Sidewalk”, but paved bike trails.

Torch: Shared his appreciation for the calculation of yearly maintenance included on page 39.

Shoberg: Explained that currently they are in an intense “maturation” maintenance phase, whereas the Duluth Traverse Plan assumes “post-maturation” with regard to maintenance costs.

Torch: Drew attention to page 52 of the Plan where language regarding e-bikes was changed.

Breeuwer: Explained that the Trails Committee made this change since e-bikes are a maintenance usage and the Mini-Master Plan is not the place for policy changes regarding transportation. Further explained the desire to have a comprehensive City discussion about electronic assist bikes.

Torch: Drew attention to page 53 in regards to the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA), which views itself as a youth development organization, not “commercial” use. Requested that language be removed.



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Shoberg: Confirmed it would be removed.

Torch: Shared that he was in Bentonville, Arkansas over break and was impressed with the local neighborhood skills area, which would be great addition to local neighborhood parks and for kids who might not be up for an 8-mile ride. Raised last question regarding the stretches of private land and how involved landowners have been with the process.

Shoberg: Confirmed they are working with all of them on access and available easements.

Edmondson: Questioned if the 6 or 7 million dollars noted on page 62 covered everything on the map.

Aldrich: Confirmed yes.

Shoberg: Explained that the amenities noted on that section will be planned in a separate process.

Aldrich: Shared that one reason these will be addressed at a later time is the number one goal is to finish the original 104-mile vision and relieve pressure on existing trailheads.

Edmondson: Shared with group that while he was on the Traverse today he noticed signage and questioned who would pay for a directional sign on London Road to Lester Park for example.

Shoberg: Confirmed that this cost would fall on the City, which is covered in more detail in the City’s Wayfinding Plan.

Schmidt: Thanked group for their hard work and noted the responses have been more than overwhelming. Questioned where the City was with an agreement with COGGS.

Shoberg: Explained it was nearly complete before this Plan, but with this Plan it will be completed.

Schmidt: Noted that as a Commission they are working hard to watch the maintenance budget. Questioned how attached the group was to the proposed trailhead locations and whether the Chester location had been fully vetted.

Shoberg: Recommended that they could be listed as recommendations that need to be vetted by public process.

Schmidt: Expressed that they are in desperate need of a campaign regarding trail etiquette for all users.

Breeuwer: Recommended that be part of the operation and management plan.

Shoberg: Confirmed the operation plan will include a lot of best practices.



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Schmidt: Requested an update regarding this should the Plan pass. Questioned who manages environmental oversight.

Shoberg: Confirmed the Planning Department does the environmental oversight.

Schmidt: Directed concerns to Jim Filby Williams regarding the difficulty for Parks staff because this Plan was fast tracked. Further expressed that despite there being support, there is danger in losing public trust and support with such a quick timeline. Questioned if the fast track was specific to applying for Regional Designation and Legacy funding.

Williams: Confirmed yes, but addressed the fast tracking by confirming it was included in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, 2010 Parks Plan, 2011 Trails Plan, 2016 St. Louis River Corridor Plan and many other Mini-Master Plans. Further explained that although this Plan is being accelerated for the purpose of competing for State Legacy funding, and the sense of urgency with the work this summer on the Stewart Creek Bridge, the Plan had ample planning and comment period.

Schmidt: Questioned the odds of receiving this round of Legacy funding.

Williams: Explained that it’s realistic to make the designation, proceeding in hopes that they are invited to apply for funding.

Schmidt: Expressed that he hears across the City that the public process should be more public. Questioned who the players in the administrative review are.

Williams: Explained that projects that proceed with administrative review are only those that require maintenance or in the 104 miles as identified in the Mini-Master Plan. Further explained that partners, like COGGS, submit project proposals, with are vetted by 20 City offices to ensure they fit within all standards.

Schmidt: Questioned the role of the public during that process.

Williams: Confirmed that they do sometimes involve the public for further review when additional design review is not necessary.

Schmidt: Shared that the issues with the DWP have been tough and there still exists many unanswered questions. Questioned if there could be a Mini-Master Plan for the DWP.

Williams: Shared that Administration’s view is that it is not necessary to add an additional layer of review given that it has been in earlier trail plans and looked at more closely than any other Duluth Traverse segment in this Plan.

Schmidt: Explained that the image in the City, whether founded or not, is that it’s being turned over to dogs and bikes, whereas neighborhoods are begging for help with their park facilities. Requested that Jim Filby Williams pass this message on to the Mayor.



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Williams: Explained that \$600,000 in half-and-half is for bikes, which is far less than what is for neighborhood parks, etc.

Breeuwer: Provided report from the Trails and Bikeways Committee, noting the time spent reviewing the Plan and their final recommendation to approve it. Further explained the Plan is appropriate and a good way to move forward for the City. Explained the only section with differing opinions was the DWP section, which Art Johnston can provide more information on.

Johnston: Explained that many things in the Plan are good, however it is moving forward too fast, specifically the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). Expressed concerns that the Plan violates the EAW, noting other City projects that were delayed for this very reason. Cited specific guidelines from the EAW and requested the EAW be amended to avoid taking an unnecessary risk. Provided second concern regarding the DWP, noting how cool the trail is the way it is and therefore should be kept that way. Shared thoughts that it remains one trail without multiple trails branching off, while also calling for a speed limit to lower user conflict and minimize trail damage. Expressed opinion that more time is needed to reach a consensus and that the DWP should not be a COGGS trail and should allow for a more diverse user group.

VIII. Comments/Questions from the Public

Jodi Slick: Thanked group for their work on this Plan and shared she is an adjacent property owner at EcoLibrium3. Expressed appreciation for the public input process and online comment period. Shared appreciation for the connections into the community from the ridgeline, as well as how essential it is as a neighborhood connector, as the Middle School currently is up on the hill and lacks public connectivity. Hopeful that this connector will remain a priority and questioned if the e-bikes could just be turned off.

Denette Lynch: Agreed that the Plan has been talked about a lot, however it moved fast during this portion when all the details came out. Shared that she is in favor of a skills area, however they should have been in the community planning process. Shared concerned that it will remain in the Plan. Further explained that the numbers on the graph don't add up, and the group is being asked to vote on a plan that's not fully worked out.

Bill Lynch: Shared that the DWP is the only section he would use and they still aren't certain how much the City will pay for it. Explained that it should be disclosed how much he will be spending before agreeing to the Plan. Further expressed that the DWP will have two different trails, one for horses and one for bikes, however it's not known how many horses will be on the trail and the trail is narrow in certain places. Requested an equestrian count.

Waylon Munch: Represented COGGS, one of the project partners, and shared a few high level notes while thanking everyone. Explained that future trail improvements are beyond the Mini-Master Plan. Commended the City for responding to the early concerns, expressing full support of the current language. Shared their intention of being good stewards of the natural resources and community needs, understanding what they need to do on their end regarding the future of COGGS and their relationship with the City. Shared that COGGS does a lot of trail work already, noting the four-person



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trail crew, which adds up to 5,000 annual trail hours, much of which are for trail maintenance. Noted that COGGS is aware their emphasis will shift from 25% to 75% maintenance. Noted their involvement with Youth Outdoors Collaborative and their hopes that the trails put in work for everyone.

Tom O'Rourke: Commended COGGS for their hard work and trail stewardship, noting how they have motivated other user groups to dream bigger. Commented that multiple use trails in the City must serve a multitude of users, and the City's focus has been disproportionately on mountain bikers. Utilized Hartley Park as an example of a trail system that has been entirely optimized for bikers. Shared that Hartley Park works with the Parks Fund budget which isn't going to grow, stating that since 2012, COGGS has received \$100,000 yearly from the Parks Fund. Explained that youth serving groups get a total of \$100,000 yearly, which points to a disproportionate focus on biking at the expense of other users. Further noted that although the trail is 85% complete, final implementation will take \$7 million to complete, leading to the broader question of how is Parks Fund money being used to support youth partners. Shared opinion that although the Mayor's values are reflected in this Plan, the Plan isn't the best way to achieve the Mayor's goals and values.

Mike Casey: Shared that the Friends of West Duluth Parks and Trails love COGGS and the Duluth Traverse, therefore they are trying to stay involved. Noted that their group's main focus is the DWP section and that they do not suggest that mountain bikes be banned from the DWP, however they encourage the City to complete a Mini-Master Plan for the DWP as alluded to in the St. Louis River Corridor Trails Plan. Further explained that multiple user groups are concerned about the future use of this section, questioning why the Duluth Traverse Plan accepts horses but not snowmobiles. Further explained that the DWP runs from Spirit Mountain to Becks Road and the DNAP guidelines do not specifically ban bike trails, but this Plan does. Expressed that the e-bike section should be removed entirely and replaced with "motorized bike," noting the connection to Esko and Proctor under Highway 35 make it a regional trail. Requested the DWP and its alignment have a separate public process.

Dwight Morrison: Distributed a document he sent to Commissioner Crosby, sharing he is representing people with disabilities. Noted that there is about 9.5 miles of accessible trail this system, including about three miles of trail to be added. Questioned where the accessibility language was in this Plan. Shared that ADA is either accessible or not accessible, with ten components for ADA standards. Further shared that the green trail now has two out of ten of those components. Expressed safety issues if he had a wheelchair and hit a rock, which is an obstruction not allowed by the ADA. Showed picture of wheelchair, horse and bike together and noted the safety issues of two-way traffic that need to be dealt with.

Dick Haney: Shared with group that as a lifetime educator who promotes healthy lifestyles, the Duluth Traverse addresses the need for people to get out and move. Explained that lots of progress has been made on this Plan, however the DWP section is different. Explained that it's a corridor that has been used for decades and it seems inappropriate that doesn't have its own planning process, with the Duluth Traverse being a significant part of the plan, specifically with the Magney-Snively dedication. Shared concerns regarding the conflict of use, safety and social issues, and hope that the Plan be amended so that the Duluth Traverse off the corridor could exist while addressing the issues of pinch points.



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IX. Final Comments/Questions from Commissioners with Motion

Breeuwer: Requested Jim Shoberg show the on-trail and off-trail sections of the Duluth Traversers on the DWP in relation to the Magney-Snively Natural Area as well as the Munger Trail, Superior Hiking Trail and Skyline Drive.

Shoberg: Explained that through the EAW process it was determined that Magney-Snively is one of the best examples of Northern Hardwood Forest and additional trail was not compatible.

Williams: Shared that the Magney-Snively Management Plan strongly discourages new trails in natural area, but not specifically mountain bikes.

Vogtman: Questioned the funding sources to address maintenance in light of out-of-town user and asked if anyone has looked at a fee system.

Williams: Explained that a “pay to play” system is something they do not want; however, donation boxes could be considered.

Vogtman: Requested that additional language on multi-use trails and who has the right of way be addressed to lower conflict of usage.

Torch: Questioned if it is too much to expect that a remote trail like this be accessible.

Shoberg: Shared that green trail is not meant to be accessible, which would be the white trail specification. Explained that white trail “may be” accessible, especially with yearly maintenance.

Johnston: Shared as a member of the Trails Committee that the Munger Trail is 500 feet away and made for bikes at high speeds, easily a place where a detour could be made for overflow.

Mike Casey: Shared that as a member of the Trails Committee the western side of town has been enjoying the DWP and is a go-to place to observe nature and therefore the experience and sense of discovery will be lost forever if bikes are allowed on it.

Edmondson: Shared feeling that the DWP has too many issues to approve and questioned if the group was sure they have addressed all the issues.

Williams: Expressed that at this late juncture it would be very unusual to depart from that public process.

Breeuwer: Questioned if the ADA sections are called out specifically

Shoberg: Confirmed they are; however, they are labeled as ADA accessible not green.

MOTION/Second: Breeuwer/Torch to approve the Duluth Traverse Mini-Master Plan and the City's



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application for Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission regionally significant trail designation.

Vogtman: Shared that he will not vote in favor tonight until amendments are made.

Torch: Shared full support of Plan as written, noting the creation of the Duluth Traverse has been in process for many years with ample opportunity for input.

Breeuwer: Thanked City for bringing a comprehensive Mini-Master Plan, which is a huge project that addresses many issues and affects virtually the entire City. Further shared that every solution is not perfect for everyone.

Edmondson: Agreed with Commissioner Vogtman that it's a tough call and even though he is an avid cyclist he feels like much work is to be done.

Bergerson: Shared that the whole Plan is amazing, however she would like to wait.

Schmidt: Expressed that he has wrestled with this decision and respects and agrees with most things. Questioned if they will bring tourists in and whether they will fund our tax base. Expressed concern about the public process going forward and shared that as a Commission they can stay on top of that be responsive to the community. Shared concerns with finances and that this decision is hard to make based on unknown figures. Expressed trust in what is being presented is safe and secure. Noted that the DWP is a place of discovery and whatever happens there has to hold flexibility to adapt over time. Shared final thoughts that all in all the Traverse is a good thing for Duluth and he will support voting tonight.

Shoberg: Confirmed that changes will be made based on feedback from tonight's meeting.

In favor: Breeuwer, Bergerson, Torch, Schmidt, Edmondson

Against: Vogtman

X. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm. Moved by Breeuwer, second by Vogtman.

XI. Next meeting

The Annual Meeting will be on Wednesday April 12, 2017 at 5 pm at the Grand Avenue Chalet at Spirit Mountain Recreation Area.

The next monthly meeting will on Tuesday May 10, 2017 at 5 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.