



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of March 13, 2019
Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting

City Hall – Council Chambers



I. Call Meeting to Order

Vice President Crosby called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: Amanda Crosby, Jill Joyce, Erik Torch, Tjaard Breeuwer, John Schmidt, Dennis Isernhagen, Britt Rohrbaugh, Dudley Edmondson, Kristin Bergerson, Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison).

Not present: Dean Vogtman, David Kirby (ISD 709 School Board Liaison), Frank Jewell (St. Louis County Board Liaison).

III. Approval of February 13th Minutes

Commissioner Torch motioned for approval of the February 13th meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Joyce. Unanimously approved.

IV. Presentations

A. St. Louis River Duluth Natural Areas Program (Informational) – Gini Breidenbach, MN Land Trust

PowerPoint presentation on the St. Louis River Duluth Natural Areas Program provided by the MN Land Trust. Indicated the nomination has been funded by a grant provided by the EPA, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funds. Mentioned the City partnered with the MN Land Trust on this project and the purpose to secure the future and protect undeveloped spaces. Reflected on the ordinance put in place by the City that allows the Duluth Natural Areas Program to protect public land forever.

Discussion: Joyce questioned how the bird surveys were performed. Gini Breidenbach indicated the bird surveys were performed by actual observations by NRRI. Joyce questioned if the trout streams were included in the map. Gini Breidenbach stated four mouths of the trout streams were included on the map.

V. Commission Committees

- A. Administrative (E-board) – meeting date: Thursday, March 28th at noon at the Parks Office
Chair – Amanda Crosby, Jill Joyce, Tjaard Breeuwer [Alicia Watts, Lisa Luokkala, Jim Filby Williams]
- B. Golf Committee – meeting date: March 18th at 10AM at the Parks office, Chair – Erik Torch, Dennis Isernhagen

VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports



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VII. New Business

A. DWP Trail Technical Use and Standards Plan (Action Item) - Jim Shoberg, Senior Parks Planner

PowerPoint presentation presented by Jim Shoberg on the DWP Trail Technical Use and Standards Plan. Indicated this is an addendum to the 2017 St. Louis River Corridor Trails Plan that establishes use guidelines for the DWP Corridor. Stated the guidelines for this project consist of the following:

1. Identify best practices for trail etiquette safety, signage, corridor usage, and user conflict mitigation.
2. Develop infrastructure that is in harmony with the surrounding environment
3. Provide clarity on the usage and development of the DWP Trail and corridor and clean up contradicting recommendations from past planning effort
4. Provide high quality opportunities for local residents and regional users. Reflected on the public process of this project and the safety considerations regarding multiuse on the trail as well as accessibility standards and access points. Provided an overview of the trailhead and parking locations.

Indicated the Trail Usage Statistics as a new category within the report. Mentioned this plan recommends the City to implement a trail counting program for different recreational uses. Indicated there will not be any lighting within the Elys Peak tunnel.

Reflected on the winter grooming plans. Indicated the City recommends not having limitations of winter grooming, this will be reviewed every three years. Reflected on a meeting had with Duluth Area Horse Trail Alliance to define manure plans. Indicated coordinated clean-up days will occur with the equestrian group that will be listed under an agreement as well as other maintenance and education responsibilities. Indicated manure must be removed from all trailheads and parking areas. Mentioned there will also be a periodic removal within the first mile of the trail. Stated horse groups will not exceed 8 users, unless there is a special event. Stated mountain bikers will have a speed limit of 15mph. Stated snowmobiles are asked to have speeds no higher than 15mph on the shared portions of the trail. Indicated bikers and pedestrians will yield to horses and must vocalize their approach while moving to the side of the trail. Stated horse trail riders will vocalize when it is safe for bikers and pedestrians to pass. Highlighted the importance of public enforcement to provide education.

Discussion: Schmidt questioned who will keep track of manure enforcement on the trail. Shoberg indicated this will be social enforcement. Schmidt stated he would like to see a robust process on mountain biking occurring on the trails, mentioned the concern of the speed of mountain bikers along shared use trails. Schmidt stated he is pleased to see the maintenance plan, and questioned how the costs were developed. Shoberg confirmed they are construction costs from actual bid tabulations from similar projects in the past. Torch questioned how Shoberg envisions accessibility from Spirit Mountain. Shoberg indicated the parking lot and the pathway to the building meet ADA Standards. Mentioned grading would need to happen as well as adding crushed limestone. Joyce questioned the name of the grant. Shoberg indicated the grant was from the State of Minnesota Legacy Funds. Breeuwer stated he would like to see a scope of



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review of this trail. Edmondson questioned how many equestrian users utilize the trail and if surveys have been done. Shoberg indicated that we do not have this data.

Mike Casey (public) shared what the term healthy means to him. Stated the sense of discovery will be gone, except during the winter months. Stated if it is groomed for fat tire biking that bush whacking for snowshoes will be gone. Reflected on the congestion caused by the multiuse occurring in the West Duluth area. Mentioned the area is a special place and he hopes it stays this way. Stated that once it is designated for horse use, that it will increase in users. Shared he hopes to see the waste concern caused by dogs is addressed. Indicated that a review of the use of the trail would be beneficial. Stated West Duluth residents are being pushed out of their areas due to overuse.

Action Item: Torch motioned to move the DWP Trail Technical Use and Standards Plan. Second by Breeuwer. Called the motion to Vote. Unanimously approved.

X. Old Business

A. Zoo Master Plan Schedule Update - Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration

Jim Filby Williams indicated Erik Simonson will be presenting during May's meeting.

XI. Division Report

A. Dog Education Campaign - Lisa Luokkala, Stewardship Assistant Manager

Luokkala mentioned the high volume of dog waste within our parks. Mentioned City Staff have been working on an educational campaign that will be revealed this spring.

XII. Public Comment

A. Discussion of Golf Citizen Advisory Committee Findings (presented at the City Council – Committee of the Whole Meeting on Monday, March 11th) - Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration

Discussion: Crosby reflected on the Golf Findings presentation that was given during the City Council Meeting on March 11th. Edmondson questioned what is expected from the Parks Commission moving forward. Jim Filby Williams indicated he would like to postpone the process questions towards the end of this meeting and to focus on the actual findings first. Breeuwer questioned if this plan includes the repayment of the debt from the golf fund. Jim Filby Williams indicated the Committees Findings show that it is not possible to pay down the entire debt-and that, at a minimum, half of the debt would be need to be waived altogether and the remainder would only be paid down each year if and when all other golf expenses have been paid. Breeuwer questioned if the financial gaps would even be achievable to pay back. Jim Filby Williams indicated that Billy Casper Golf would be



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able to cut operating costs from an expense side, which would reduce the size of the gap. Tim from Friends of Duluth Public Golf shared the possibility of fundraising, but discussion will need to occur. Jim Filby Williams indicated the Golf Committee met biweekly for over a year and hired a consultant to gather the findings. Indicated many questions are now answered that were not before. Breeuwer questioned if the developer could obtain an easement for continued ski trail use at Lester Park Golf Course. Jim Filby Williams shared this is beyond the scope of the work that was done by the Golf Committee. Joyce questioned how the participants were polled and how they were selected. Jim Filby Williams indicated that there were two surveys – a randomly sampled phone survey of citizens and an online survey sent to 8000 Duluth Golf participants. Jim Filby Williams shared with Joyce the location to find the details of the methodology of the report. Crosby questioned if the golf community supports the possibility of raising fees. Jim Filby Williams reflected on the rigorous survey that was performed and indicated golfers are not willing to pay significantly more to play a round of golf. Tim from the Friends of Duluth Public Golf indicated the results from the citizen survey seem to reflect that golfers do not want to see an increase in cost.

Jim Filby Williams stated the City's golf consultant set the rates, but because of the condition of the courses and the pricing competition by nearby competitors – there can only be a minimal increase. Tim from the Friends of Duluth Public Golf stated the survey find runs contrary to the public comments he heard during the Committee of the Whole Meeting held on Monday night. Torch stated the pleasure had by serving on the Golf Committee. Torch indicated that many hours were spent into the document by going through word for word to make sure everyone on the Golf Committee agreed to the information that was put in the report. Schmidt questioned if there would be two separate recommendations if a consensus is not made. Tim from the Friends of Duluth Public Golf indicated he believes this to be true. Jim Filby Williams shared a meeting will occur with the Friends of Duluth Public Golf President, Chris Stevens, to discuss if consensus can be made. Schmidt shared he hopes urgency to make a decision does not interfere with the end product. Schmidt highlighted he would like to have a robust public process with the potential sale and land acquisition at Lester Park. Isernhagen stated he was part of the Golf Citizen Advisory Committee. Isernhagen indicated the land is owned by the community, and their voice should be heard and mentioned that the process has been a good start. Crosby opened the floor for public comment.

Public Comment

Tim McEvoy (public) thanked the Parks Commission for their service to the community reflected on the City's annual spending, shared that he doesn't understand the crisis had the amount lost from the golf courses. Stated closing Lester would destroy Enger Golf Course as well. Reflected that having a potential buyer from Florida does not reflect on the weather conditions had in Duluth. Questioned if anyone had conversations with the Lakeside business community. Questioned how the City could ever sell park land when it was donated. Shared raising the rates at the golf courses would not be a problem and the passes are currently being sold at a low cost.

Trish Lilliberg (public) invited the Parks Commission to the Enger Pancake Breakfast where proceeds go to junior golf. Stated Billy Casper Golf provides golf clubs for free during the breakfast. Mentioned



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the event occurs on April 27th from 8am-noon, Lester will have a pancake breakfast May 18th. Indicated there will be volunteer days to help maintain the golf courses.

Nathanial Bushek (public) indicated he is not a golfer but a Lakeside resident and frequent Lester Park user. Mentioned that he allows his daughter to swim in the clean river and the area transports him to a natural area. Stated the City's park land are what brought him to live in Duluth. Shared this experience is made possible by the buffer near the Lester Park Golf Course.

Pete Lilliberg (public) indicated he opposes the sale of any park land the City owns. Highlighted the need to raise fees and increase the participation. Stated that increased rounds of 10,000 could significantly improve the financial status of Duluth golf.

Rich Staffon (public) stated he is the President of the Duluth Izaak Walton League. Reflected on the Izaak Walton League's mission to safeguard greenspaces and public lands. Mentioned it would be in the City's best interest to keep the park land rather than having it sold for private development. Highlighted the portion of land that could be potentially sold would protect Lester River. Indicated that it is the peoples land and not the City's land, recommended having a master plan for other recreational uses.

Tim Lee (public) shared the benefits of public golf courses were not included in the Findings Report. Stated an average of 70k rounds of golf are played on Duluth courses and 210k hours are spent by Duluthians on our public courses. Stated the game of golf provides life skills and stated the City is focused on youth programming. Mentioned Duluth golf provides programming for 150 kids each year and has the potential to expand. Shared he knows three people moved to Duluth because of the golf opportunities, 1 being specific to Lester. Mentioned that he knows of a business the relocated to Duluth because of the golf opportunity. Indicated Ecumen promotes the proximity of golf courses under their program. Mentioned that if we focus on enhancing our courses, that it will enhance the community. Shared the Duluth Golf budget provided over \$750k in employment to 80 individuals over a short season and mentioned that \$750k is spent on local goods and services.

Libby Bent (public) indicated she is new resident to Duluth, shared she has done research on the City and mentioned they have always found a way to expand park property. Reflected on the beginnings of Skyline Parkway that City Council adopted. Reflected on Vision Duluth 2035 and how it states sprawling infrastructure is unsustainable. Stated the City strives to protect lands around neighborhoods. Highlighted the City needs a robust conversation from the public on the potential land use.

Dan Baumgartner (public) stated there is no going back from eliminating green space. Indicated the survey polling was not clear. Stated the City has not made a good faith to keep both courses open and the decision to close any portion will be devastating to youth and colleges who use the courses to practice. Mentioned there will be environmental repercussions on a piece of property that has not developed in 100 years. Indicated that you cannot fit all the rounds with less amount of holes and shared there are plans from Friends of Duluth Public Golf to make it more inclusive and to add more



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diversity.

Mike Casey (public) indicated that he has spent much of his time towards the public process and he will be setting limitations. Stated he was called a hand grenade by a consultant that works close to the City. Shared the public needs to fight tooth and nail because Administration has already made up their mind.

Jim Filby Williams indicated the City does not plan to develop a golf master plan. Stated there is urgency on the issues, and the recommendations will be brought to City Council in the next couple of months. Requested input from the Parks Commission if they would like to be part of the voting process for the recommendations.

The Parks Commission unanimously agreed to be engaged with the process.

Mike Casey (public) indicated Commissioner, John Schmidt, has been a wonderful addition to the Parks Commission. Shared he has been attending the Parks Commission meetings for the last five years. Stated the Parks Commission meetings were better when they were held outside of the Council Chambers.

XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm. Moved by Commissioner Breeuwer. Second by Commissioner Joyce.

XIV. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 17th, 2019 at the Spirit Mountain Grand Avenue Chalet.