



PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of March 11, 2015

Central Hillside Center
12 E 4th St



1. Call to Order

Commissioner Welles called the meeting to order at 5:06 pm.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Commissioners Braun, Dodge, Holak, Schmidt, Schraepfer, Torch, Viken and Welles

NOT PRESENT: Commissioners Albright, Crosby and Hall.

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Viken stated the February meeting minutes did not express his concerns over the Lakewalk Task Force's recommendation to release the easement at the Bacon Point property in the event the Lakewalk footpath proved to be unfeasible and requested the minutes be amended to reflect that. Commissioner Braun also stated a similar concern at the meeting that was not reflected. The minutes will be amended to reflect this. Motion made by Commissioner Viken, seconded by Commissioner Braun. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Presentations

A. ST. LOUIS RIVER CORRIDOR – Jim Filby Williams (action requested).

Mr. Filby Williams began his presentation by stating his appreciation of the number of Parks and Recreation Commissioners who attended the Committee of the Whole presentation earlier in March. Mr. Filby Williams stated that the Administration is asking the Commission to pass a "resolution of intent" to give broad, general support for the slate of projects as outlined in the plan.

Mr. Filby Williams stated that the proposed projects are thoroughly grounded in the public's wishes for these areas and is based on numerous plans and public meetings conducted over the past several years.

For each and every project there will be additional authorizations before proceeding. The Administration will go to the City Council for all expenditures under current guidelines. Projects will come back to the Parks and Recreations Commission seeking approval for plans, unless there is a public plan already approved by Commission.

Mr. Filby Williams stated that the Administration is not required to seek approval of this plan from Commission or Council, but they do this because the Administration values the relationship and the input from the Commission and the Council. The resolution of intent will go to the Council on March 23, 2015.

Mr. Filby Williams expressed his willingness to answer any detailed questions about the plan outside of the meeting, but preferred, in the interest of time, to discuss the plan at a higher level tonight.

Mr. Filby Williams stated as each investment is made associated annual maintenance needs to be kept in mind. The plan addresses numerous issues of deferred maintenance. 75% of projects are replacement, repairs or renewals of existing assets and restarting lifecycle of the infrastructure.



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He asks that we not invest too much meaning in the dollar amounts. They are meant to represent the proportion of expenditures for projects. Many projects can only go forward with outside funding.

Commissioner Schmidt stated he appreciates the City taking the maintenance issue seriously, as those concerns come to the Commission on a regular basis.

Mr. Filby Williams stated that operating costs increase over the life span of a facility and, in near term, these newer facilities will require less upkeep. It's important to view challenges in a broader context. All municipalities are challenged with these maintenance issues: roads, sewers, parks. Often funding is limited and continues to shrink. It's been especially hard over the last 15 years due to prolonged fiscal crisis, shifting annual operations to health care costs and cuts to Local Government Aid. The park assets that have been most used and loved have been maintained reasonably well by City staff and partners.

Commissioner Holak reiterated his comments of a need for indoor athletic facilities and he is disappointed this is not in the plan. The City is 10 years behind on this type of facility which can benefit thousands of youth and bring in tournaments. Many of the suitable locations would be in the River Corridor. He understands it's an expensive proposition and is intimately familiar with the current challenge of finding indoor facilities for sports. Half of Duluth's season is indoors. He wishes some funds would go towards this. Benefits would be tremendous.

Mr. Filby Williams stated the City also sees a clear need for better quality, additional indoor sports space. Notable challenges: 4 season structures are the type the City has the least capacity to maintain. The Master Plan recommended the City disinvest in these facilities other than five hubs. In the case of the Gary New Duluth Center, it will be maintained solely by outside funding. The sheer cost of the project is prohibitive. There are legislative constraints requiring much funding to be spent on tourism and outdoor recreation only.

Commissioner Holak pointed out the Master Plan recommends a need for an indoor facility. He understands costs, but thinks a lot of money is going to the Zoo and Wade Stadium. Commissioner Holak questions youth use of Wade. With rental fees, a facility could eventually turn a profit and may even become a moneymaker.

Commissioner Viken thinks it is a great project, doesn't want to change anything but thinks it stops short. He likes the indoor sports facilities. Asked why the Western Waterfront Trail didn't extend beyond Morgan Park to Fond du Lac. There is no off road trail connecting everything together.

Mr. Filby Williams upholds the City remains strongly committed to pursuing taking advantage of the trail right-of-way all the way to Jay Cooke. Reasons not to include: 1) can't build it until US Steel plant is done with the clean-up (4 years out). 2) Community is still actively debating essential question of going with rail, rail with trail or just trail. Commissioner Viken asked that "rail with trail" be clarified. City thinks it is presumptuous to shorten that debate by taking action on this.

Mr. Filby Williams said we can convert the rail bed to trail. It's increasingly common to develop corridors that include both rail and trail, especially with slow moving trains. In many cases, the rail



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bed is almost in the river. Rail with trail would require a lot of fill. How much more expensive would this be, could we get regulatory approval? Main issue is timing of this plan.

Commissioner Schmidt stated the maintenance aspect is important and thinks there is need to emphasize increased responsibilities. He asked for a friendly amendment to add to the resolution. Commissioner Viken agreed.

Motion:

The Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission supports the Resolution of Intent to move forward with planning and designs of the St. Louis River Recreation and Tourism Plan. The Parks and Recreation Commission would like the ongoing maintenance costs of the projects to be considered in the planning of projects.

Moved by Eric Viken; 2nd by Michael Schraepfer
Passes: 8 – 0

Commissioner Torch commended the work of City Staff and user groups to put this plan together.

B. CENTRAL HILLSIDE PARK MINI-MASTER PLAN – Dale Sellner (action requested)

Mr. Sellner described this planning process as a mini-mini master plan. The City hired a consultant, gathered public comment and is formally and respectfully requesting support of the Plan by the Commission.

The playground will be the first item implemented. It will be moved from its present location near 3rd St to an area closer to the building. The City has already purchased the first playground structure. The public prioritized new playground equipment, a gazebo, lights and grills.

The project can only be implemented in phases based on funding availability. The gazebo will be the second phase. Third will be a lighted path through the middle of the park.

Councilor Sipress noted part of the plan includes significant re-grading. He believes the re-grading needs to be done before other elements of the Plan. Mr. Sellner affirmed that it would.

Councilor Gardner commented on the outdoor stage; she's had many conversations about having one at Cascade Park instead of here. She's concerned about the noise of all the traffic drowning out performances. She asked if this came up in the process. It did not.

Commissioner Schmidt stated lots of events happen in the park which could benefit from the stage. Councilor Gardner thought it's probably ok with music but theatre would be difficult. She's surprised it didn't come up again in the process. Councilor Gardner suggested since it's phased, perhaps this could be revisited later.

Commissioner Schmidt inquired about the lighting. Mr. Sellner stated it will be dark sky, LED lighting and there was strong community support for this.



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Commissioner Viken stated he used to live right near Cascade Park and it's relatively quiet. He thinks it would be a good location for an outdoor theatre.

Councilor Sipress asked if Councilor Gardner wanted language to specify this issue in the motion. Councilor Gardner is fine without it.

Commissioner Welles stated he would like a motion to review the theatre portion of the Plan. He asked Ms. Bergen if language could be added to the Plan to consider Cascade Park as a possible theatre location.

Ms. Bergen stated there are usually minor tweaks to a plan between Parks Commission and Council approval. She can add language about giving further consideration to Cascade Park site for a stage.

Councilor Sipress suggested the Commission pass a clean motion and language can be added to state this will be looked at in the future.

Commissioner Schmidt stated there was public support for a stage at the Central Hillside Park. He wants it to remain in the Plan.

Ms. Bergen stated we would need to do an assessment to see if a theatre would be feasible at Cascade Park and that would be a new process.

Motion:

Motion to approve the Central Hillside Park Mini-Master Plan, with the condition that the community theatre/music stage location is revisited at a later date and brought back to the Commission for support made by Joel Braun. Seconded by John Schmidt. Motion passed 8-0.

C. LIMITED USE PERMIT FOR LAKE SUPERIOR ZOO FENCE IN GRAND AVE RIGHT-OF-WAY – Greg Stoewer (action requested)

The Zoo fence encroaches in the right-of-way by 13 feet. The culvert in Kingsbury Creek will be replaced by a bridge. The City needs to get permission to enact these improvements in the right-of-way as it is on park property.

Motion:

Whereas fence and landscaping of Fairmont Park are within Grand Avenue right-of-way, and the Parks and Recreation Commission desires for said fence and landscaping to remain, and;

Be it therefore resolved that the Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility for maintenance and repair of said fence and landscaping for that portion of Grand Avenue right-of-way shown on attached Exhibit A, and authorizes execution of a Limited Use Permit between the City of Duluth and the Commissioner of Transportation, State of Minnesota.

Moved by Eric Viken; seconded by Erik Torch. Motion passed 8-0



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D. CHAMBERS GROVE STREAM HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT – Daryl Pederson, MN Land Trust (informational)

Daryl Pederson, project manager for MN Land Trust, is working with the City and DNR to do habitat restoration along the St. Louis River. Daryl gave a presentation on the river restoration element of the Chambers Grove Park restoration project. The DNR encouraged the City to include river habitat restoration in projects and agreed to support it. The Army Corps of Engineers is also involved, as the project needs to be flood neutral. The restoration work is funded by federal and state money.

The current structure is poor fish habitat. Sheet piling has been impacted by the 2012 flood and age. It is not functioning the way it should. The current design makes it difficult to get to the water. The City wants to improve access and get people in touch with the river.

The project will use bio-engineering material to protect the river banks. There will be ADA access and carry down boat access. There will also be rock structures to improve spawning habitat for lake sturgeon and walleye. The St. Louis River is the most important habitat for sturgeon spawning in western Lake Superior. Water quality killed off Sturgeon in the 1950s. The restoration process began in the 1980s. Historic habitat was above the dam but the fish need pour-over cascades to spawn. The project will drive trees with root balls into the banks to stabilize them. The project will not impact flow velocities or vectors. The Corps modeling ability was taken advantage of to design spawning areas.

TIMELINE: The City will make park improvements in 2016, working to complete the restoration work the second half of summer. The downside is the park will be completely closed after July 4, 2015 through 2016. Construction of restoration will continue July through October.

Commissioner Dodge questioned whether rocks would come from nearby quarries. Mr. Pederson commented that transportation costs keep sourcing nearby and trees will be sourced locally, hopefully from MN DOT during their Hwy 210 restoration.

Commissioner Viken asked what the project's life span would be. Mr. Pederson stated once trees are submerged, they don't rot. The design is not very erosive; therefore, the remedy should last for 50 –100 years. The sheet pile is failing due to ice scouring, floodwater flow over top and erosion occurs from behind. Because the project is on the inside bend, there's not much erosion. Boat access will be in quiet water below the eddy.

The current design was created as tie-ups for boaters. A question was asked if the community had been consulted. Access is difficult with deposits in the river and they have not really heard many people discussing a need for tie-ups.

E. WESTERN SPORTS CORRIDOR MINI-MASTER PLAN – Bryan Harjes, HKGi (informational)

Staff and Advisory Committee meetings have been conducted and an open house was held on March 3. A needs assessment is being done via the Parks website and data collected from the open house.



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The Commission was updated on future meeting plans and the community input process, to date. Preferred concepts will be reviewed in May. Discussed work on possible location of the Cross City Trail from Carlton St to Wheeler.

There is no focus on the Wade Stadium as that restoration has already been planned and partially implemented with state bond money this past fall. The other fields surrounding the stadium, parking, paths to parking lots, and vehicular traffic are all considered in this Plan. Connectivity to the Heritage Sports Center will be looked at, but no other aspects of the Heritage facility (privately run). The Advisory Committee will meet in April with a second open house in May.

Commissioner Holak is happy to hear of interest in indoor facility and a sports corridor, but there is not much space available. Mr. Harjes believes we need to test on ground space availability.

Commissioner Viken questioned utilization of all the fields. Mr. Harjes states it is highly used despite softball numbers being down. Practice, tournaments, and games are major drivers of use. The only weekends not booked this year are Grandma's and July 4. Field 5, which is not as heavily used, may be transitioned to soccer, or turned into a High School regulation field.

Ms. Lynch states it would be difficult to move the skate park. It is all poured concrete. She encouraged outreach to skateboarders. In her opinion, roundabouts are pedestrian unfriendly. She appreciates depiction of the Cross City Trail on the map. She questioned the need for speed bumps. She does not think they are a good idea given the volume of traffic. Mr. Harjes stated Metropolitan Interstate Council recommended them. Mike Casey commented he believes the speed bump would be a good addition, as need exists for cars to slow down. Commissioner Viken questioned how places make roundabouts pedestrian friendly. Mr. Harjes replied there are design elements that make them safer.

Commissioner Viken also asked if there was anything planned for winter activities in the complex. There are no winter sport plans at this time.

Commissioner Viken noted the original orientation of the Cross City Trail from Sister Cities Park to Carlton St has been modified somewhat. Ms. Bergen stated Engineering and Planning are working on the orientation. It is not a parks issue. Commissioner Viken suggested a loop trail option. Mr. Harjes thought that was a good idea.

F. PARK POINT PROPERTY ON THE BAYSIDE OF MINNESOTA POINT BETWEEN 16TH AND 19TH - Elizabeth Hooper (informational)

Ms. Hooper, a Park Point resident, came to discuss the status of a piece of tax forfeit land between Bayshore Nursing Home and Baypoint Apartments known as Pontliana Woods.

1978 – the land was designated as conservation area in compromise to maintain green space to allow building of Baypoint Apartments.

1994 – St. Louis County vetoed town house complex. An action plan for conservation was



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created for the land.

2012 – aerial photograph – county recommends land going to sale for auction. The photo is inaccurate. The water level is higher than depicted and the shoreline is 30 feet less than in the picture. The land is also very marshy.

2013 – the DNR objects to sale because it borders the bay which is part of the estuary. The County Board voted land out of conservation by 4 to 3. The City was not aware of documentation from the DNR about the land.

Ms. Hooper asked the Commission to express interest in this matter to Keith Hamre in City Planning. The parcel is slated for auction in July. A developer is apparently no longer interested in the land. This is the last bit of green space in that area.

Dave Johnson has been part of Park Point issues for 30 years. He has been working to save the property since the 1990s. He wants to formalize protection of this land because it is crucial for migration patterns.

The Comprehensive Plan did not properly designate this land as wetland in 2006. The area was not included in that plan and was therefore zoned R1. She wants to know if the DNR intentionally took it off the wetland list or was it an oversight. Councilor Gardner recommends that Mr. Hamre ask the DNR to reassess the land in its present state. She thinks it's pretty likely it will be re-designated. Near to this property, the County is allowing residents to buy adjacent tax forfeited land.

To date, the DNR has not been responsive. At the E-Board meeting, Commissioner Hall recommended this go to the Parks and Facilities Committee for further study. Commissioner Viken asked if MN Land Trust has reviewed the land.

Commissioner Welles asked what we should do with this. Do we study this further? We don't have a lot of authority, but could support efforts to take further action to place this into conservation. The lynchpin is DNR action. Councilor Sipress recommends Committee referral; he thinks the Commission's opinion will be helpful to the City. Commissioner Schmidt wanted presenters to come primarily for information, not action at the moment.

Discussion was held about possible strategies to protect the land. A key piece is to speak with Mr. Hamre and continue to press the DNR to respond to requests.

Motion:

The Parks and Recreation Commission referred the Pontliana Woods issue to the Parks and Facilities Committee for study, review, and determination of future actions. Moved by Commissioner Schmidt. Seconded by Commissioner Viken. Motion passed 8-0

5. Commission Committees

A. Parks and Facilities – meeting date: TBA

Chair - Joel Braun – Jon Welles, Ed Hall, Michael Schraepfer, [Dale Sellner]



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No update.

- B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: February 20 at noon
Chair – Ed Hall – Eric Viken, Tom Albright, [Kathy Bergen]

No update.

- C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: TBA
Chair – Tom Albright - Eric Viken, Andy Holak, [Judy Gibbs], [Art Johnston]

No update.

- D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult) – meeting date: March 3 at noon
Chair - Jon Welles – Andy Holak, Erik Torch [Pamela Page]

Chester Creek Concert band applications were reviewed and a schedule was set. Still need to finalize the lineup.

6. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

City Council approved recommendations of Lakewalk Task Force. Work is already starting.

7. New Business

1. Recognition of Commission service by Joel Braun and Eric Viken.
Commissioner Welles commended the service of departing commissioners Viken and Braun.
2. Appointment of Parks Commissioners to the Parks Fund Grant Selection Committee for 2015 - grant applications due on April 1. Need 4 members for entire year of two granting cycles. Review will be at the end of April. Volunteers: Jon Welles, John Schmidt, Ed Hall, and Michael Schraepfer.
3. Erik Torch agreed to serve on the Hartley trail planning group.

8. Old Business

Annual Meeting Committee – Commissioners Hall, Albright, Viken, Torch

Parks staff are working on the agenda for the Annual Meeting. It will be sent out later in the week. The meeting will be on Wednesday, April 15 starting at 5:30 pm at Spirit Mountain's Grand Ave Chalet. There will be displays about St Louis River Corridor projects and speakers include Mayor Ness, Jim Filby Williams and a representative from the River Corridor Coalition. Remaining time will be for open discussion on projects.

9. Public Comments

10. Division Manager's Report - No additional report

Adjournment: Moved by Commissioner Schmidt, Seconded by Commissioner Braun at 8:03 pm.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 13 at 5 pm at Central Hillside Center.

MOTION(S)

Motion:

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Moved by Commissioner Viken; 2nd by Commissioner Schraepfer.
Passed 8 – 0

Motion:

Motion made to approve the Central Hillside Park Mini-Master Plan, with the condition that the community theatre/music stage location be revisited and brought back to the Commission for support.

Moved by Commissioner Braun; 2nd by Commissioner Schmidt.
Passed 8-0

Motion:

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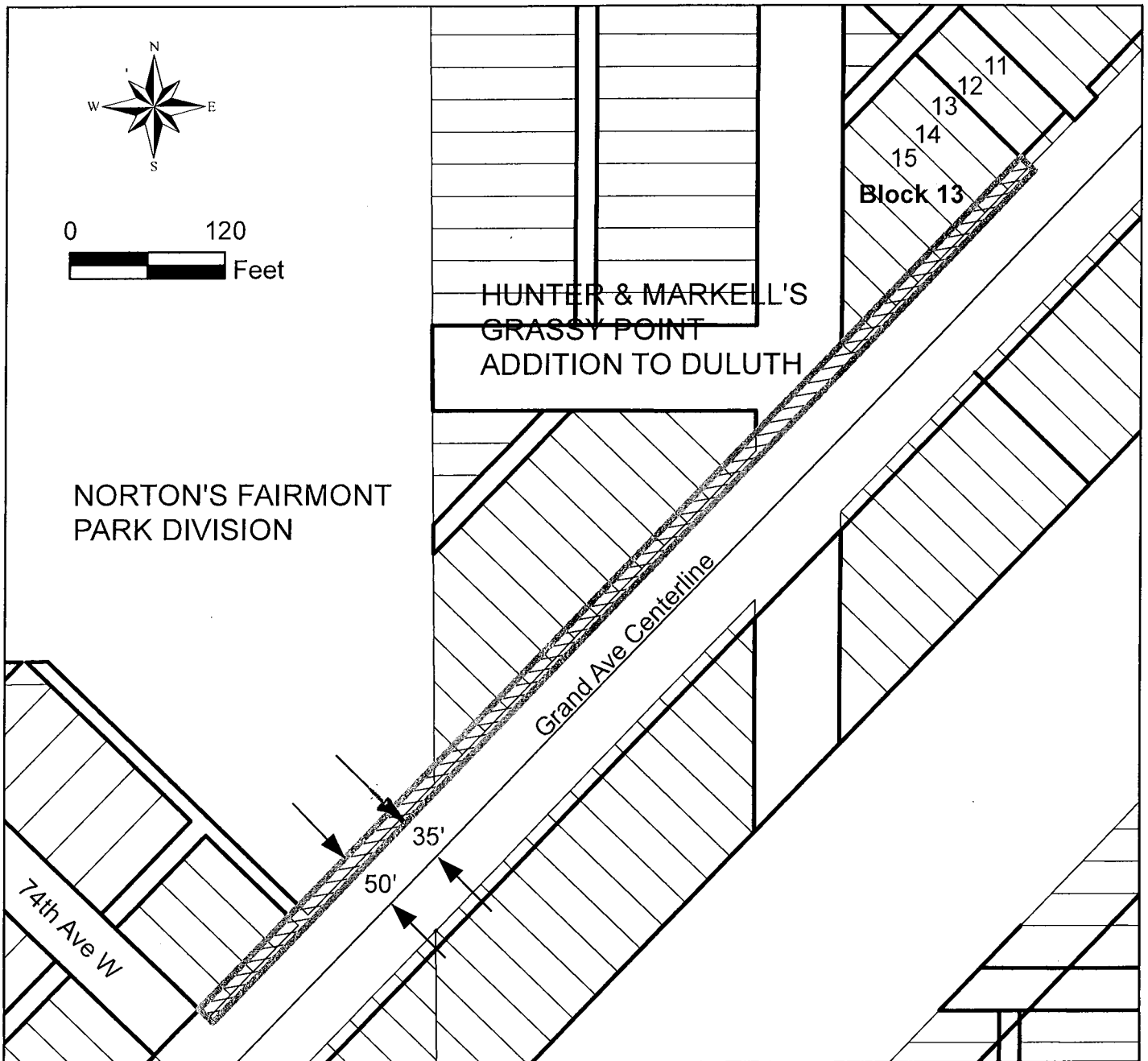
Moved by Commissioner Viken; 2nd by Commissioner Torch.
Motion passed 8-0

Motion:

The Parks and Recreation Commission referred the Pontliana Woods issue to the Parks and Facilities Committee for study, review, and determination of future actions.

Moved by Commissioner Schmidt; 2nd by Commissioner Viken.
Passed 8-0

EXHIBIT A



Description of Limited Use Permit in Trunk Highway 23 (Grand Avenue)

That part of Hunter & Markell's Grassy Point Addition to Duluth and that part of Norton's Fairmont Park Division of Duluth, according to the plats recorded in St. Louis County, Minnesota, described as follows:

A 15.00 foot strip bounded by a line parallel and offset 50.00 feet northwest of center line of Grand Avenue, as platted in said Hunter & Markell's Grassy Point Addition and said Norton's Fairmont Park Division; bounded by a line parallel and offset 35.00 feet northwest of said center line of Grand Avenue; bounded on the northeast by the northeast line of Lot 13, Block 13 of said Hunter & Markell's Grassy Point Addition, and the southeasterly extension of the northeast line of Lot 13; and bounded on the southwest by the northeast right-of-way line of 74th Avenue West as platted in said Norton's Fairmont Park Division, and the southeasterly extension of said right-of-way line.



FENCE IN RIGHT-OF-WAY

