



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes April 10, 2024

Harrison Community Center



I. Call Meeting to Order

President Demmer called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: David Demmer, Kala Pedersen, Beth Olson, Hailey Sigafus, Sarah Beehler, Dave Cizmas, Stephanie Williams – ISD 709 School Board Liaison, Ashley Grimm – St. Louis County Commissioner

Not Present: Josie LaPorte, Terrance Lovejoy, Azrin Awal – City Council Liaison

III. Approval of the March 13 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Beehler motioned to approve the March 13 meeting minutes. Commissioner Pedersen second. Unanimously approved. Motion carries.

IV. Presentations

A. Volunteer Recognition – Glen Nelson and Jerry Nowak

Jerry Nowak and Glen Nelson were recognized for their contributions to the cross-country ski trails in Piedmont. Their commitment and dedication led to the City acquiring the land for park use. Glen and Jerry were honored with commemorative signs reminiscent of the beloved handmade signs along the trail.

B. Superior Hiking Trail Association Master Plan (Informational) Lisa Luukkala, Executive Director

Demmer questioned if there would be further discussion and presentations as the plan is implemented, specifically the Duluth section. Peterson stated that the plan endorsement would be at a concept level. Stated that there would be regular status updates if not additional presentations to Commission. Director Filby Williams stated that the City's partnership with SHTA is unique in that the SHTA owns much of the trail property in the form of easements, rather than with lease agreements with the City.

Pedersen questioned if this is the first time SHTA has taken survey data and whether they will be collecting in the future. Luukkala stated that this is the first time they have collected data, and they will continue to refine the data collection process for the future.

Pedersen questioned if the Great Northern Route will be a multi-use trail, due to its overlap with the DT. Luukkala stated that there would be a higher level of signage and education on multi-use trail experience. Stated that in this section of the DT, there is more foot traffic than bike traffic.

Olson questioned if the SHT users are also spending time in other Duluth parks and trails. Luukkala stated that there is more data in the plan, and there was a membership survey which collected more information.

Cizmas questioned if the SHT closes for weather, and if that aligns with the DT. Luukkala stated that they do close for weather along with Parks and Recreation, and they hang signs along the trail.

Cizmas questioned how the communication will take place for multi-use trails in Duluth. Luukkala stated that there is already a section on multi-use experience in the guidebook. Stated there is also information on their website and other materials. Stated that they work with COGGS for safety issues and other considerations.

Cizmas questioned how they plan to communicate with other user groups that use the trail. Luukkala



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stated that there is a desire for collaboration among user groups, as maintenance is expensive.

Cizmas questioned if the City and SHTA is interested in redesignating other trail corridors in other parts of the City as multi-use. Peterson stated that there would need to be a more specific proposal process for consideration and case-by-case review.

Director Filby Williams questioned what some of the top threats to the SHT are and what requests SHTA has of the City of Duluth. Luokkala stated that development encroachment is a challenge. Stated that the goal is immersion in nature, not simply connection between neighborhoods. Requested that recreation development take the SHT into consideration.

Demmer questioned if the SHT trails in Park Hill/Forest Hill will be shared with COGGS. Luokkala stated that they are not planned to be shared, but alignments will be separate.

Demmer questioned if there are maintenance agreements with other entities for shared assets. Luokkala stated that there is some shared infrastructure. Peterson stated that for the Duluth Traverse, there is an agreement with COGGS granting them permission for maintenance. Stated that it is common for collaboration and communication to occur for maintenance issues. Stated that the SHTA has a different type of agreement with the City.

Demmer questioned if they have quantified the economic impact of the SHT. Luokkala stated that they will be pursuing a separate process to determine that data.

C. Annual Report (Informational) Jessica Peterson, Manager

Beehler questioned how the grants from 2023 compare to other years. Peterson stated that the RAISE grant was a large amount, which contributed to the large overall total funding amount. Stated that many others are frequent and cyclical grants that have been used for projects in the past. Stated that the grants page is fairly consistent in previous annual report so easy to compare.

Olson questioned where the annual report is shared. Peterson stated that it is posted on our website and this year it will be pushed on our social media. Stated that annual reports are used by staff in the future as well. Stated that it is a useful tool for historical documentation.

Grimm questioned what the trajectory is looking like for deferred maintenance projects. Director Filby Williams stated that new administration is still learning about Parks priorities. Stated that funding is still an issue and an ongoing challenge, especially for neighborhood assets. Stated that a sustained upturn in the economy would be a good time to advocate for reinvestment in parks and libraries.

V. Commissioner Committees

Administrative (E-Board) meeting date: Thursday, May 2 at noon, Portman Community Center
David Demmer, Kala Pedersen, Josie LaPorte [Jessica Peterson, Bridget Erickson]

VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Commissioner Grimm mentioned that the county could provide some information or resources for the land acquisition/transfer project.

VII. New Business

VIII. Old Business



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IX. Division Report

X. Public Comment

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:57 pm.

XII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday, May 8 at 5:00 p.m., Harrison Community Center.