



PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of September 9, 2015

Central Hillside Center
12 E 4th St



1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:03 pm.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Commissioners Albright, Breeuwer, Contardo, Crosby, Hall, Holak, Schmidt, Schraepfer, Torch, Welles and Wodash

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Contardo motioned for approval of the August 12 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Schmidt, unanimously approved.

4. Presentations

A. Enhanced Maintenance – Commissioners Hall, Schmidt and Contardo (action requested)

After looking at annual, deferred and future capital needs, Commissioners Hall, Schmidt and Contardo, presented a resolution calling for significantly enhanced maintenance of the City of Duluth's gardens, parks, park buildings, park structures, recreation areas, recreation facilities, and trails. Presentation of the resolution is made to assist the Mayor and City Council with addressing these needs in a comprehensive way.

Commissioner Schmidt emphasized the comprehensive approach taken by this resolution comes from cooperative efforts of three City divisions, Administration and Councilor Sipress.

Councilor Sipress thanked Commissioners for bringing this forward and focusing attention on the issue.

President Hall motioned to support the Enhanced Maintenance resolution; second by Commissioner Welles; unanimously approved.

B. West Duluth Sports Corridor Mini-Master Plan –Kathy Bergen (action requested)

Ms. Bergen presented the final version of the West Duluth Sports Corridor Mini-Master Plan. Commissioners have reviewed the plan twice during development and provided feedback along the way. Other than housing, no substantive changes are in the final version. Numerous public meetings and stakeholder engagements were held throughout the process. The plan is needed to pursue implementation of the River Corridor project for Wheeler Field. Wade is not included in the Corridor Plan. The City will seek State bond funding for work there. Phase 1 is estimated at \$1.35 million and Phase 2 at \$1.6 million.

Commissioner Breeuwer read questions regarding housing but did not see mention of it in the Plan. Expanding parking and removing housing was taken out of an earlier version due to the need to minimize the loss of housing.

Commissioner Holak asked about status of the nearby bowling alley. Ms. Bergen stated it was

purchased by another entity. Commissioner Holak also noted that he is happy to see additional language stating the City will pursue an indoor athletic field in the future.

Ms. Bergen reminded Commissioner Holak about the Visit Duluth Sports Committee to discuss an indoor sports facility.

There is no timetable set for Phase 1. It is dependent on the ability to secure \$500,000 in match funding. City staff began working on developing plans to raise the match.

Commissioner Schmidt questioned whether charging for parking at Wade has ever been considered. Charging at both Wade and Wheeler has been discussed. It is important to note that charging for parking also has costs. There needs to be more research for further consideration.

Does money from parking at Bayfront go to the City? No, it goes to the DECC to cover costs of parking and promotion of Bayfront. All fees collected for use of Wade are dedicated to that facility.

Commissioner Torch inquired about the net loss of housing. It is anticipated that only one house will be lost. It is not in the plans for Phase 1, it expected at some point in the future to help with access to a little league field.

Public Comments:

Has City thought about pursuing naming rights? As there is no system in place to consider this, Ms. Bergen stated it has been discussed in past. It is a possibility and may be considered as part of the funding plan.

Commissioner Contardo moved to approve the West Duluth Sports Corridor Mini-Master Plan; second by Commissioner Breeuwer; unanimously approved.

C. Naming recommendations for Lowell to Lakewalk Trail –
Tom Albright, Trails and Bikeways Committee (action requested)

The Committee met in August to discuss a slate of final names for Parks Commission to consider for renaming of the Lowell to Lakewalk connector trail. Commissioner Albright gave an overview of the trail, the need to rename the trail and described the public process to solicit names. 45 -50 names were submitted. City staff, Commissioners and public representatives narrowed down the submittals to four finalists:

1. Academic Connector Trail
2. Academic Crest Trail
3. Campus Connector
4. Academic Grade

Commissioner Contardo moved to name the Lowell to Lakewalk trail the Campus Connector; second by Commissioner Welles.

Commissioner Wodash clarified that the trail will actually connects campuses. Yes, the colleges and other schools like Congdon Elementary.

Motion passes unanimously.

D. Publication of Hartley Environmental Assessment Worksheet–Kathy Bergen (informational)

The worksheet is being done for several reasons. A Legacy grant was received based on the mini-master plan. It is a very sensitive park and they wanted to do everything possible to accommodate various interests and not have negative impacts on wetlands and wildlife. The 30-day review and comment period is underway. Each and every comment needs to have a written response. After comments are received, the Planning Commission decides if an EIS needs to be undertaken. On September 23rd there will be a public hearing as part of the Planning Commission meeting.

Commissioner Schmidt asked who checks the report to make sure it is consistent with City plans. City staff review the worksheet and work with the consultant to make sure it is consistent.

Have other user groups been involved? User groups have been informed of the process and given the opportunity to comment on the worksheet. We need to be ready to respond to citizen concerns. Environmental issues have been discussed for several years and we are now engaged with the consultant to look at details so that when we implement the plan we are doing it right.

Commissioners were encouraged to read the report and make comments.

E. Riverside Small Area Plan–Kathy Bergen (informational)

The Riverside Small Area Plan was developed by Planning Commission, who will be holding a special meeting on Sept. 22. This is an opportunity to provide input into the Plan. The Plan refers to an area that is larger than the Riverside neighborhood and includes Tallus Island, part of Spirit Mountain, etc. The Plan has significant impacts on recreation in this region. Parks staff members are involved in the Plan and it is consistent with current parks plans that have been adopted as part of the vision of the St. Louis River Corridor.

Commissioner Breeuwer voiced a concern about the proposal to change Unified Development Code (UDC) to require landscape buffer between housing of different densities and recreational amenities and housing. This is a significant change for the City. He fears this change will limit the ability to make trails, and may be used to obstruct the development of parks amenities.

Mr. Filby Williams recommended voicing that a Small Area Plan is not the place to recommend changes to UDC. Councilor Sipress thanked Commissioner Breeuwer for catching this recommendation, as it would have significant impact on the City as a whole.

Ms. Bergen noted buffering is an issue that comes up regularly between residents and the City parks. Many people assume green space will always be there. This recommendation

probably came from residents comments.

Motion by Commissioner Breeuwer stating the Parks Commissioner feels a Small Area Plan is not the right vehicle for implementation of City-wide policy changes, such as changes to the UDC, since these affect City wide actions, including the Parks and Recreation Department. Motion seconded by Commissioner Albright. Motion passes unanimously.

5. Commission Committees

A. Parks and Facilities – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Michael Schraepfer – Jon Welles, Ed Hall, John Schmidt, [Dale Sellner]

-Tennis court and basketball court inventory and condition reports

-Status of Park Point property on the bayside of Minnesota Point between 16th and 19th

B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: Thursday, September 24 at noon at Parks office

Chair – Ed Hall – Jon Welles, Erik Torch, [Kathy Bergen]

No update.

C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Tom Albright - Andy Holak, Tiersa Dodge, [Judy Gibbs]

-Name submission process for the Lowell to Lakewalk Trail

D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult) – meeting date: TBA

Chair - Jon Welles – Andy Holak, Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby, [Pamela Page]

No update.

6. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Commissioner Torch announced an event sponsored by the Northland Foundation and the Minnesota Land Trust to discuss increasing park usage by at-risk youth. The event will take place on October 20th from 6:30 – 9:00 at the Zeitgeist Arts Center.

7. New Business

A. Mini-Master Plans started and scheduled public meetings – list will be emailed out in coming days.

B. Leash laws –on-going concerns and enforcement

C. 2016 Fees for Parks and Recreation – standard percentage automatically added each year. Fees are used to do enhanced maintenance at facilities where fees are generated. Feedback needs to happen within the next month. Issue will be referred to Parks and Facilities Committee to review this schedule.

8. Old Business

A. Future of Lake Superior Zoo

Ms. Bergen discussed that an initial meeting between City and the Zoo Society took place. Society and City have met and are working to develop a joint vision.

B. Duluth Children's Outdoor Charter

9. Public Comments

Ms. Lynch asked why the City doesn't look at the old Central High School complex for an indoor athletic complex. Commissioner Holak will bring this to the Visit Duluth Committee.

10. Division Manager's Report

A. Lindsay Dean has been hired as the new Parks and Recreation Division Manager. She starts on September 23rd.

11. Adjournment:

Commissioner Albright made motion to adjourn; second by Commissioner Breeuwer; unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm.

12. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held 5 pm, Wednesday, October 14, at Central Hillside Center.

MOTION(S)

1. President Hall motioned to support the Enhanced Maintenance resolution; second by Commissioner Welles; unanimously approved.
2. Commissioner Contardo moved to approve the West Duluth Sports Corridor Mini-Master Plan; second by Commissioner Breeuwer; unanimously approved.
3. Commissioner Contardo moved to name the Lowell to Lakewalk trail the Campus Connector; second by Commissioner Welles; unanimously approved.
4. Motion by Commissioner Breeuwer stating the Parks Commissioner feels a Small Area Plan is not the right vehicle for implementation of City-wide policy changes, such as changes to the UDC, since these affect City wide actions, including the Parks and Recreation Department. Motion seconded by Commissioner Albright. Motion passes unanimously.