



PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of November 4, 2015

Duluth Heights Community Recreation Center
33 Mulberry St



1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:03 pm.

2. Roll Call

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

NOT PRESENT: Commissioners Schmidt and Crosby

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Welles motioned for approval of the September 9th meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Contardo. Motion passed unanimously, 9-0.

4. Introduction of New Staff – Lindsay Dean

Ms. Dean was welcome by President Hall. Ms. Dean gave a brief introduction of herself and her prior experiences.

5. Presentations

A. 2015 Fall Parks Fund Grants –Lindsay Dean (action requested)

Ms. Dean gave an overview of grant recommendations for the fall grants round. A representative from the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation gave an overview of the review process. 15 applications were submitted, with 13 recommended for funding, with \$52,000 available.

Commissioner Albright asked about how the group came to decisions about reductions and increases for some of the requests. Ms. Dean stated that with limited funding they eliminated multiple requests from the same organization. The Chester Bowl Improvement Club request was reduced because of scale of the project.

A question was asked when in the case of the duplicate applications if the committee asked the applicant organization about their priority request. No, the committee prioritized the applications without input from the applicants.

Commissioner Contardo made a motion approve the grant recommendations, Commissioner Welles seconded. Motion passes unanimously 9-0.

B. Irving Park Mini-Master Plan–Lisa Luokkala (action requested)

Heidi Bringman, LHB & Ms. Luokkala gave an overview of the mini-master plan process. Ms. Bringman made a presentation on the details of the mini-master plan update. They met three times over the summer with stakeholders and the public to identify needs and project goals. The football field is the top priority as it's the only field available for youth up to 8th grade to play and practice on. A major constraint identified is the entire park is in a flood plain. An



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overview of the 2012 flood impact was given along with plans for park development.

If approved the park will receive a \$1.3 Million HUD Resiliency grant. Priorities are sport fields, accessibility to the field, site lighting for safety and playground renovations. Other phases including field lighting, trail improvements, restrooms, pavilions, etc. Total estimated costs will be \$1,997,399.50.

Cost breakdowns were not developed by phase but by building elements.

President Hall asked if we don't get HUD money where we envision funding comes from. Ms. Luokkola state the park qualifies for St. Louis River Corridor funding and an active community club is very interested in fundraising for the work. Ms. Bringman stated HUD is not all or nothing, the City may get a portion of HUD funding. The City will decide priorities with amount awarded. Other funding sources are available, DNR funding for park restoration, etc.

President Hall asked if it is possible to plan an estimate of ongoing maintenance costs. It is possible. It will require working with maintenance staff to generate the numbers.

Councilor Sipress pointed out HUD may dictate what will be funded and the City may not be in a position to decide what will get funding. Mr. Filby Williams state it's unclear what HUD will do but feels there is likely going to be dialogue on projects to be funded.

Councilor Sipress asked to have a budget based on phases prior to going to the City Council. He echoed the importance of including maintenance costs in the plan.

Commissioner Holak professed the lacrosse club has also used the fields for practice, and this has been an important place to practice. Seasons are compatible with other sports to allow multiple uses.

Commissioner Albright asked if there is any formal resolution from community clubs to support the plan. Ms. Luokkola said, no. We attended two of the club meetings to present on the plan. They were very eager to see it passed and begin working to fund raise on this.

The Parks Commission supports the Irving Park Mini Master Plan as presented. The Commission requests that the following two items be added prior to the Mini Master Plan being added: (1) cost estimates for the phasing of the project, and (2) cost estimates for ongoing maintenance of the park. Motion made by Commissioner Albright. Motion seconded by Commissioner Welles. Motion passed unanimously, 9-0.

C. Equestrian Resolution–Lindsay Dean (action requested)

Ms. Dean stated the goal of the resolution is to express support by the Commission of City Council modifying the existing Ely Peak ski trail to allow for seasonal equestrian use. Ms. Dean gave an overview of the process to date. Stakeholders involved in the process include River



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Corridor Coalition, Duluth Area Horse Trail Alliance, Duluth Cross Country Ski Club, and the Isaac Walton League.

Commissioner Torch expressed concern about the resolution coming in front of Commission for action without supporting documents being given to Commission in advance of the meeting. Mr. Filby Williams responded that he regrets the oversight of not getting the materials to the Commission before the meeting, but urged the Commission to gather the needed information to move on this action item in order to keep momentum on this project.

Councilor Sipress thanked all stakeholders for engagement and building of positive relationships. He urged the Commission to gather information needed to move on the resolution tonight.

Commissioner Wodash asked the estimated costs accompanying the recommendation. The study provides detailed specifications and the estimated cost is \$100,000.

Commissioner Holak asked if the trail re-routes have been identified, what the approximate mileage is and if they have been approved.

Commissioner Wodash is supportive of the trails but has a hard time supporting the resolution without the detailed report.

Commissioner Breeuwer wondered if it's possible to listen to stakeholders.

Mr. Barbo stated the DAHTA needs the Commission support.

Izzak Walton League, Paul Anderson, does support the proposal. He considers the request to be within the management plan, which is very detailed. He spoke to supporting the needs of the equestrian riders.

Siiri Morse, Duluth Cross Country Ski Club, states this is originally a ski trail and is part of the ski trail master plan. They want the trail to be wide to keep the integrity of it as a ski trail. They support the proposed modifications.

President Hall remarked that this has a good discussion of the nature of the report.

Councilor Sipress responded to consultant opinion about the area being a mediocre equestrian experience. Magney has been very important to local equestrians.

Commissioner Welles stated that he appreciates the trust built between City and user groups.

Commissioner Holak is impressed that the groups came together and built trust. He stated he is hesitant to move on this without seeing the report and does not want this to set a precedent.



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Commissioner Welles moves to offer support for the resolution (15-0763R) to commence design and fundraising to improve the Ely Peak Ski Trail Loop in Magney Shivley Park to support environmental sustainability use as an equestrian trail on a seasonal basis. Motion seconded by Commissioner Contardo. Motion passed, 9-0.

D. Lake Superior Zoo/Fairmount Park Planning Update –Jim Filby Williams (informational)

Mr. Filby Williams was joined by John Scott, President of the Zoological Society Board. The City and Society have reached a consensus on a broad outline of a future plan for the Zoo which includes renewing the Zoo, creating a top quality park, and accomplishes these goals at cost estimate of \$15 million. The plan retains large exotic animals including a bear exhibit and renews many existing exhibits. It also desires to develop a new forest discovery exhibit and an indoor play space. The footprint of the Zoo will be reduced with vacated space being utilized as public park space.

Mr. Filby Williams outlined the time line for input and review of the concept which will utilize Commission meetings for public input on the plan.

Mr. Scott stated he is excited about the future relationship between the Zoo Society and the City. The current concept has a close up experience with animals as central focus. Reinvestment in the Zoo has not happened for many years.

President Hall expressed hope that budget for the plan will have realistic assessment of annual maintenance of Zoo and surrounding park space and who will bear those costs.

A question was asked about an earlier moratorium on Zoo repairs pending a plan decision. Mr. Filby Williams clarified that the moratorium was on any development or significant alteration of the facilities and the moratorium has been lifted.

Commissioner Albright expressed congratulations to the City and Zoo on coming to a consensus. He urged the City and Zoo to be intentional with what the public process will look like.

Commissioner Breeuwer asked about funding the City provides to the Zoo. With the new concept and capital investment he hopes the City will look at the need for continued operating subsidy. Mr. Filby Williams said the City is aware revenues will go up once improvements are made, and the level of subsidy will be determined in the future. He believes in the importance of capital maintenance and does not want the Zoo to be placed in this position again.

Commissioner Wodash inquired about the reallocation of flood damage money, citing previous reallocations from other parks. The \$15 million is inclusive of Zoo and non-Zoo portions of the park. \$12 million for Zoo portions, \$3 million for non-Zoo portions. FEMA allocated only half of funding needed for Kingsbury and Lincoln Parks, the City chose to allocate all funding to Lincoln Park to fully complete one project. Restoration costs are part of \$15 million request.



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Where will funds for paying for the design process come from? Mr. Filby Williams stated the City is going to fund it. Source is to be determined. Cost is not known at the moment, the City is currently drafting an RFP. Who will be on the team to work on this plan? There will be further discussion with the Zoo Society, however a panel of 11 people: 4 Society, 4 City, 3 Commission. Anyone interested in serving on it should contact Commissioner Hall.

Commissioner Albright asked about the "To Be Determined" areas of the concept. Mr. Filby Williams said there are three logistical issues that need to be worked out with the Society.

- 1) Clarification of exact placement of floodplain;
- 2) Determine placement of animal care to new Zoo footprint from existing location; and
- 3) Renegotiate some state funding agreements with state and private foundations.

Councilor Sipress is very pleased to see this consensus concept come forward. Applauds those involved especially Jim Filby Williams for all the work he's put in to it.

Mr. Filby Williams acknowledges the heavy burden Zoo staff and volunteers have had for the past two years during this period of profound uncertainty. Hopes a trusting relationship can be rebuilt going forward.

E. HUD Disaster Resilience Grant-Parks & Trails Impact-Jim Filby Williams (informational)

A HUD Disaster Resilience Grant application was recently submitted. \$78 million was requested to repair flood damage (including housing and green and gray infrastructure). \$8 million is earmarked for parks and trails. Much of this will serve as match for SLRC. A final decision is expected in January. HUD reports that the proposal is strong and we can expect significant funding, but it is unclear how much.

This will further exacerbate the burden on staff with all the projects currently underway. Commissioner Breeuwer questioned if there is any flexibility in reallocating funds. Any reallocation needs to be negotiated.

6. Commission Committees

A. Parks and Facilities – meeting date: TBA

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

No update.

B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Ed Hall – Jon Welles, Erik Torch, [Lindsay Dean]

No update.

C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: TBA

Chair – Tom Albright - Andy Holak, Tiersa Woodash, Tjaard Breeuwer, Art Johnston [Judy Gibbs]



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No update.

- D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult) – meeting date: TBA
Chair - Jon Welles – Andy Holak, Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby [Pamela Page]

No update.

7. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

None given.

8. New Business

- A. Neighborhood Parks Mini-Master Plans

Ms. Dean reported eight public meetings were hosted by the Parks Division for 11 Neighborhood Parks Mini-Master Plans in the St. Louis River Corridor. Plans allow each park access up to \$50,000 in matching grants.

9. Old Business

- A. Update on U.S. Steel Negotiation

Two remaining alternatives are under consideration. We are seeking to forge a compromise between two concepts acceptable to all stakeholders. Once an alternative is agreed upon, we will negotiate use of City river front land.

- B. Update on Hartley EAW

The Hartley EAW went to the Planning Commission last Tuesday, October 27. The Planning Commission did not require further study, and we can move forward implementing the plan.

- C. Update on St. Louis River Corridor

Memorial Park planning meeting was held. Lincoln Park plan also held meeting. Chambers Grove tour recently held. Restoration is completed, now will have park improvements.

- D. Update on Park Maintenance Resolution

\$500,000 supplement for parks maintenance is in the 2016 budget. Councilor Sipress stated it was well received by Council. Mr. Filby Williams stated he is optimistic to move ahead and plan for the use of the funds.

10. Public Comment

Ms. Lynch, River Corridor Coalition, Parks and Trails Committee, voted in favor of rails and trails option at clean-up site. Regarding maintenance, she heard from several City staff they are not able to fully utilize budget because it is taken for other uses. Wants to make sure it's not being used for other needs. President Hall stated he is confident new systems in place will help it be fully utilized. Mr. Filby

Williams stated there is no redirection to outside of the maintenance budget, there is significant re-appropriation within maintenance budget due to unforeseen events.

Mike Casey, thanks Commissioners for taking up the River Route Bike Ride offer.

Merritt Park Community Club representatives asked the City to think about trying to figure out how to go about getting match money. What will happen with the money if not able to secure match? Mr. Filby Williams verified the match requirement allow for matches of in-kind services and volunteer time. The City has no intention of having a death grip on money. It's meant in the spirit of a challenge for neighborhoods to add additional value to parks.

Commissioner Hall asked if CPRP Grant funds are allowed as match funds. Yes, we're looking for creative ways to add value.

Community member Brandi Worthing asked if funding is available for indoor play space. Mr. Filby Williams described limits of tax revenue to support tourism and outdoor recreation. Funding has already been preliminarily allocated.

11. Adjournment

Commissioner Breeuwer motioned to adjourn. Motion seconded by Commissioner Wodash. Meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.

Next meeting is Wednesday, December 9 at 5 pm Central Hillside Center.

MOTION(S)

1. Commissioner Contardo made a motion to approve the grant recommendations, Commissioner Welles seconded. Motion passed unanimously, 9-0.
2. The Parks Commission supports the Irving Mini Master Plan as presented. The Commission requests that the following two items be added prior to the Mini Master Plan being added: (1) cost estimates for the phasing of the project, and (2) cost estimates for ongoing maintenance of the park. Motion made by Commissioner Albright. Motion seconded by Commissioner Welles. Motion passed unanimously, 9-0.
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