



PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of January 13, 2016

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, Crosby, Hall, Schmidt, Schraepfer, Torch Welles and Wodash

NOT PRESENT: Commissioners Contardo and Holak

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Welles motioned for approval of the December 9, 2015, meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Schmidt. Motioned carried.

4. Presentations

A. Planning & Park Point Update –Keith Hamre, Planning Director (informational)

Mr. Hamre provided an update from the Planning Department on projects relating to Parks.

1. Rezoning City owned parks to P1 status continues. Working east to west, are currently working on the Lincoln Park and Park Point areas. It has been challenging as there are poor legal descriptions for some parks. Work continues with Mr. Filby Williams to come up with more concise descriptions. The Parks Department is updated on a quarterly basis.
2. Rezoning of the Lakewalk was postponed because of parks undertaking some planning work on it. There are a number of parks on tax forfeited property zoned R1, which the county views as high value. Would like property that has trails and other facilities zoned P1 status. For example the Piedmont Ski Trails are all tax forfeit land.
 - Are there planned projects in the River Corridor that may be effected by rezoning?
No, there are not. The process is simply working methodically from east to west.
 - About 5 years ago there was a project underway to pull together legal descriptions to find where all the parkland is.
Yes, we are building off of that work. Priority is on Corridor projects.
 - Once we figure out designated commercial uses on the Lakewalk, would these be grandfathered in when zoning is changed?
Yes, or the code could be modified to allow approved commercial uses on the Lakewalk.

Mr. Hamre provided additional background on tax forfeit law.

Councilor Sipress stated there is a lot of green space in Duluth that people take for granted and it is not protected, tax-forfeited land. There needs to be good collaboration between the Commission, Planning and Council to work together with the County who is working more diligently to sell these parcels.

The County cannot sell land that is not in conformity with the City land use plan. There are plans to have more updates in the next 12-18 months.

3. Work has continued on the Park Point small area plan for the past 18 months. It started at the Commission in discussion about access points and developed tiered access points.
 - a. Tier 1: promoted points with facilities.
 - b. Tier 2-3: more neighborhood access points, less developed, not promoted.
Council allowed up to 16 tier 2 or 3 access points with points every 2-3 blocks.
 - c. Further planning revised to 15 neighborhood points, and more discussion about upgrading facilities at tier 1 points and promoting more spread out use.

There is need for Park Point and City-wide discussion about desired facility upgrades. These are important issues as Park Point becomes a national destination and hotels are developed. The Commission wants to hold public hearings before taking it to Council.

President Hall would like to do this in conjunction with the Planning Department to improve facilities. Mr. Hamre agrees.

- A couple years ago the City signed a lease with the YMCA to operate the Beach House. Have there been improvements in operations?

Ms. Dean has a sense it's going well. There is a meeting scheduled soon to discuss renewal of their lease. She will report back to the Commission after the meeting. Commissioner Schmidt sees that cosmetic deterioration has slowed. Ms. Dean informed the City is investing \$100,000 in the Beach House this year.

- Commissioner Schmidt referenced the 13th Street access point advising it is an issue that needs to be dealt with. A number of deaths and drownings have taken place there. There is a need to improve safety, specifically due to the riptides at that location.

Ms. Dean advised the Park Point mini-master plan is scheduled in 2016 and \$100,000 will be spent on Lafayette Center upgrades.

Commissioner Schmidt inquired about plans for 13th Street. Ms. Dean was uncertain but will follow up. President Hall wants to discuss 13th Street issues at the e-board meeting to see if some things can be done before the plan, like signage. Ms. Dean also referenced current work with UMD to develop rip current safety stations.

President Hall requested to keep the subject on the agenda, and discuss at the E-board meeting.

4. The Lincoln Park plan is coming up soon. Heritage Preservation Commission was asked to review the plan as there are historical elements in the park. They will provide input and comments on the plan. Whenever there are historical elements in parks, we will incorporate their feedback.

5. Commission Committees

- A. Parks and Facilities –meeting date: TBA

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

Discussion on tax forfeit land and green space. Commissioner Schraepfer feels it is important to be proactive in the process and approach the County first.

- B. Administrative (E-Board)–meeting date: 12:00 pm on Thursday, 1/28, Parks and Recreation Conference room.
Chair –Ed Hall–Jon Welles, Erik Torch [Lindsay Dean]
- C. Trails and Bikeways–meeting date: TBA
Chair –Tom Albright –Andy Holak, Tiersa Wodash, Tjaard Breeuwer, Art Johnston,[Judy Gibbs]
Meeting immediately following tonight's commission meeting to discuss cross-city trail. Will discuss various options being proposed.
- D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult) –meeting date: TBA
Chair -Jon Welles –Andy Holak, Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby [Pamela Page]
Chester Bowl concert series – selection process will begin soon. Applications are available as of today. Selection to happen on March 15th.
- E. Skyline Parkway Advisory Committee–meeting date: TBA
Chair –Patrick Contardo–[Dale Sellner]
Councilor Sipress: happy to see this as a formal committee. Asked Ms. Dean for an update. Just in preliminary stages, have not met yet.

6. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Commissioner Albright stated there is significant planning around Zoo that's moving forward. Zoo is a priority for the City. Next Tuesday will be a public meeting to review current plans and options. Ms. Dean informed there will be an official Parks Commission open house. Three concepts will be presented along with questions from Commissioners and public input. The final plan will be presented in February with final approval scheduled for March.

President Hall asked about process to date. Commissioner Albright commented the meetings have been good to date; very healthy and productive.

Commissioner Wodash asked for updates on Lincoln Park planning meetings. Comments will be posted next week and will be presented for action in February.

Commissioner Crosby serves on the Disability Commission. Discussed idea of joint meeting of Commissions at Disability Commission meeting in April.

Discussed some concerns voiced about lack of accessible swing being purchased. City planned to purchase, but this has not happened. Ms. Dean will check in to this.

Councilor Sipress will continue to serve as Council-Parks Liaison. Lakewalk taskforce recommended a pedestrian only footpath be built in gap. The City contracted with LHB for a feasibility study. A sneak preview was received and the path is feasible, subject to soil testing. The cost estimate is uncertain at this time. LHB will probably present a report to the Committee of Whole, then take it to the Commission looking for a recommendation.

7. New Business

- A. Election of Officers

Slate of Candidates;

President: Ed Hall
Vice President: John Schmidt
Secretary: Patrick Contardo

No seconds needed. Motion passes unanimously.

Commissioner Albright spoke of appreciation for Commissioner Hall's leadership on the Commission.

There will be a joint E-Board Meeting for old and new officers–January 28 at noon in the Parks Conference Room.

B. Upcoming Public Meetings

Provided updates of recent and upcoming public meetings.

Hall requested email updates of scheduled meetings.

C. 2016 Park Commission Meeting Locations

Future meetings are scheduled primarily in Council Chambers which will have better amplification. Sipress said that it creates greater distance between the public and the Commission. Perhaps Room 303 might be a good compromise as it's not as formal.

Commissioner Hall spoke of desire to have meetings around the city. Discussion of importance of consistency and transit options.

Matter referred to e-board for action.

8. Old Business

A. Update on U.S. Steel Negotiation

No update

B. Update on Lake Superior Zoo/Fairmount Park Planning

Park Commission Open House for the Zoo-January 19th at 5:00pm in City Hall, Room 303

C. Update on St. Louis River Corridor

Expect to hear from HUD about resiliency grant by the end of January. Updates on mini-master plan schedule to come to Commission for action.

D. Update on Sports Facility Project

There was a lot of good discussion at the last meeting. City staff want to be actively involved in this. The proposal focused on sports tourism, also want it to include community use. There will be a meeting to discuss this with Visit Duluth to expand focus.

9. Public Comments

Ms. Lynch raised concerns about scope of Lakewalk feasibility. Councilor Sipress gave context on the scope of the study conducted by LHB.

Ms. Lynch raised concerns about the speed at which some of these plans are being acted on

and did not feel there is sufficient time for public comment. President Hall spoke of the importance of the role of the Commission to allow public input. There is no need to vote on plans at first presentation.

Concerns were raised about the Zoo process. Ms. Dean provided background on compelling reasons for the fast pace of the process including accreditation and grant implementation deadlines.

Councilor Sipress commented on the number of projects that have been launched and the unbelievable stress and pressure placed on Parks staff. This isn't done out of malice, but due to enormous workload on parks staff. He hopes that we can slow some of this down in the future to improve our processes.

10. Division Manager's Report

A. Commissioner Albright asked about Hartley issues and any updates. Ms. Dean advised the City is in the middle of a lawsuit regarding Planning Commission's decision that an EIS was not required. The City is challenging the lawsuit and the project is on hold at the moment. The legal team is confident the issue can be resolved in time to complete the grant requirements.

11. Adjournment:

Commissioner Albright made a motion to adjourn, second by Commissioner Welles, unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 6:42 pm.

12. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held **5 pm, Wednesday, February 10, at City Hall – Council Chambers.**