



PARKS and RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of February 10, 2016

City Hall Room 303
411 W. 1st St



1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:04 pm.

2. Roll Call

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

NOT PRESENT: Commissioner Breeuwer

3. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Welles motioned for approval of the January 13, 2016, meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Schmidt. Motioned carried.

4. Presentations

A. Lincoln Park Mini-Master Plan –Lisa Luokkala, Project Coordinator (action requested)

Ms. Luokkala, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth, Parks and Recreation Division, and Heidi Bringman, Consultant, LHB, provided an overview of the Lincoln Park Mini-Master Plan (final draft) for Park Commission approval. This is the first master plan that Lincoln Park has ever had, and the parks infrastructure is in need of repair; including the damage done to the park from the 2012 flood.

The Lincoln Park Mini Master plan has the park broken into three sections (North, Middle and South). South section is the highest use and most of the recommended improvements are in that section. Ms. Bringman reviewed existing conditions of the three segments, according to the developed plan.

Core themes of the proposed plan include improved safety and visibility; complying with ADA accessibility requirements; connecting user spaces to improve use; and improving access to the trail system. Two cornerstone features of the park include the WPA Pavilion (currently closed due to 2014 vandalism) and Miller Creek (which features retaining walls and natural bedrock).

Ms. Bringman reviewed the suggested improvements in each section. For the North and Middle segments, focus on trails improvements, habitat restoration (including invasive species removal) and discussion on how to best utilize Lincoln Park Drive. The highly used South segment includes a re-alignment of the road; relocating the playground near the picnic pavilion; eliminating the staircase to increase accessibility; fix retaining walls; restoration of the WPA pavilion; implementation of two ½ court basketball courts; develop a natural play area by Elephant Rock (to include an additional picnic pavilion); and restoring the active use upper terrace lawn area. The plan also requires the City to work with user groups to relocate the current disc golf course.

Ms. Bringman spent a good deal of time informing the Commission on the Mini Master Plan's

focus on "Rethinking Lincoln Park Drive." The plan provides some options for future use of Lincoln Park Drive; including closing the drive and turning it into a pedestrian trail and bikeway, and/or; making it a one-way drive.

The total cost estimate for the plan is \$1,749,396. However, Ms. Bringman noted these are numbers coming from 2016, so depending on when the phases are implemented, the numbers could change. The annual operations and maintenance cost of this plan is estimated to be approximately \$67,000 per year.

President Hall invited Commissioners to make comments or ask questions:

Commissioner Wodash:

Is the cost of the porta potties in the maintenance budget ongoing after restoration of the WPA pavilion?

- Ms. Luukkala replied the number is based on current costs until restoration, then those funds would be transferred to the maintenance of the permanent facility. The goal is to restore the pavilion, there is no plan for additional bathroom facilities.

There is a lack of garbage cans. Is adding more part of the plan?

- Ms. Luukkala replied that the budget line for site furnishings would include the cost for more garbage cans. The placement and number of trash receptacles would be determined in the design phase.

Is the picnic space in the budget a new one?

- Ms. Luukkala replied that the plan does reflect the replacement of the pavilion.

How long is the existing retaining wall expected to last?

- Ms. Bringman replied she was not trained to provide an expert answer to that question – an engineer would be needed, but given the external conditions it is likely only good for a couple more years.

Could the two ½ basketball courts face each other to become one?

- Ms. Bringman replied that would be a possibility.

Would the Informal entrances be included in the maintenance budget?

- Ms. Bringman replied that this would need to be discussed with the City staff to see if they'd be recognized as formal, signed entrances.

Commissioner Albright:

Should the installation of the gates to control use of Lincoln Park Drive be pulled into Phase 1 of the budget?

- Ms. Luukkala replied that suggestion would be made in the final plan.
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Does the park currently have porta potties?

- Ms. Luukkala replied that there are not porta potties in the park right now. The vandalism of the pavilion was caused by the setting of an adjacent porta pottie on fire. Porta potties are only available when permitted events pay for them.

How soon do you see Phase One rolling out?

- Ms. Luukkala replied that SLRC has \$500,000 of ½ and ½ dollars available to Lincoln Park

but it needs to be matched 1:1 to be accessed currently. The City is looking at CBDG dollars and smaller grants to leverage the available funds. Hoping to start in the next 1-3 years. FEMA restoration will begin this year.

Commissioner Albright encouraged park staff to consider restoring bathrooms in the interim as it would greatly help in re-establishing the park and public usage.

- Ms. Luokkala replied that based on feedback from the public meetings a maintenance list has been provided to Park Maintenance, which included the call for restoring bathroom facilities.

City Council Representative Sipress:

Which phase is the realignment of Lincoln Park Drive around the playground?

- Ms. Bringman replied that the realignment for the parking lots are in Phase 2. Entrance realignment on 3rd is the last phase.

Sipress commented that it was nice to see the restoration of the WPA Pavilion was included as the creek and the pavilion are central assets.

- Ms. Bringman replied that a national group, the Urban Land Institute, came to town to look at the Miller Creek water shed. There were 12-15 of them, and they were just baffled at how beautiful the park is – especially because of the historic features.
- Ms. Luokkala replied that a popular comment at the public meetings was that people wanted to see more programming in the park and the Mini Master Plan focused on more effective park usage.

Sipress responded that he believes restoration of the Pavilion will encourage park use.

Commissioner Torch:

Commissioner Torch reminded Commissioners that the Parks Fund granted monies to a group to host a concert series for children in the park next summer.

Commissioner Crosby:

Will the pavilion be restored to be accessible?

- Ms. Bringman replied that getting to the building is accessible but she was not sure if the bathrooms are ADA compliant. If it's going to be on the registry, it has to retain its historical value – but that does not preclude ADA compliance.

Commissioner Holak:

Commissioner Holak noted that he was excited to see the restoration of the upper terrace included in the plan. He commented that he wanted to be sure that the natural play area at Elephant's Rock would not detract from the natural features of the area and the current use of the rock (including winter sledding).

- Ms. Luokkala replied that those considerations would be part of the design phase.

Commissioner Schraepfer:

Commissioner Schraepfer commented that he thought the plan was very well done.

Commissioner Torch:

Commissioner Torch commented that he was happy to see the inclusion of maintenance costs in the plan. What was the reluctance expressed about the closure of the roadway at the public meetings?

- Ms. Luokkala replied that the concerns came from more of an aging population who wanted to access the upper areas of the park without dealing with the steep grade. This is one of the reasons for looking at the viability of a one-way road. Additionally, people and residents are using it as a City street.
- Ms. Bringman replied that while the roadway is not up to current standards and it is not safe, people don't want to get rid of it. However, they recognize that young drivers are "car partying" on the side of the road. The plan recommends looking at the closure of Lincoln Park Drive be explored.
- Ms. Bringman also noted that there were different audiences at each public meeting and it takes time to get used to the idea of closing the roadway.

Is the road salted and plowed currently?

- Ms. Luokkala replied that the road has been seasonally closed in the past, but is open most of the year.

Commissioner Hall:

Commissioner Hall asked City staff to bring plans to move forward with closure explorations back to the Parks Commission for review and approval.

Commissioner Schmidt:

Commissioner Schmidt echoed Commissioner Torch's support of the inclusion of maintenance costs in the final plan. He also asked where the money comes from for the invasive species work.

- Ms. Bringman replied that the money is generalized in the budget as landscape enhancements. Additionally, we would be utilizing volunteers. There would be a need to discuss plan and priorities with Maintenance and Staff.
- Ms. Luokkala replied that the City hosts a service program called Duluth Invaders for volunteer support. In accordance with other plans, the invasive species work would include a site inventory and the development of a site plan.

Commissioner Contardo:

Can you use the \$500,000 now?

- Ms. Luokkala replied that it is currently written that a 1:1 match must be leveraged to access these funds. The 1:1 match can be provided through additional grants, in-kind donations and volunteer hours.

How are we going to address the vandalism now?

- Ms. Luokkala replied that work with the internal task force was needed to work out the pilot plan and move forward with it in the Phase One timeline.

Is the action of the Commission on Phase One or the entire Mini Master Plan?

- Commissioner Hall replied that the Commission would be taking action on the entire plan as a guiding master plan, but we would revisit the phases as they are implemented.

Commissioner Albright:

If funding is secured would we move forward with later Phases before earlier ones as noted in the budget?

- Ms. Luokkala replied that there may be items that would be done out of the current listing of the phases if funding became available. The Phases, as listed, is our preferred

order. User groups may also work to generate funds for a Phase 2 or 3 project which would move it up in the timeline.

Commissioner Hall:

Can the work be done on the Pavilion be done this year?

- Ms. Luokkala replied that the City is looking at options for funding within the City to move that up in the process?

Did you receive any comments from the website?

- Ms. Luokkala replied that we received two comments on the online form, both from youth serving / active living coordinators indicating support for the road closure and playground. Additional comments were received directly by email and phone to Ms. Luokkala.

Public Comments

Jodi Slick (from EcoLibrium 3 - a Lincoln Park business) requested that the Lincoln Park Mini-Master Plan view as an addendum the Lincoln Park Watershed Master Plan developed by the Urban Land Institute. This plan was developed through a public process, including 92 stakeholder interviews and includes actions that need to be taken into account outside of the park. Ms. Slick noted that Lincoln Park is Duluth's lowest income neighborhood, and the Urban Land Institute Plan looks at how to connect the Park to the business district; connecting these two is an equity issue that will be addressed in coming years. Ms. Slick stated that she is in support of the plan, but believes it should connect with the other planning documents for the whole area.

Bill Lynch (West Duluth) commented that he was against the closure of the road as older folks will not be able to utilize the park. He also commented that he was against the investment of money into natural play area when the whole park is already a natural play area. Mr. Lynch suggested that money could be put to better use.

Denette Lynch (West Duluth) commented that the road should not be removed, nor should it be a one-way as it would take away the view of the lake coming down. Ms. Lynch noted that there are already parallel trails along the road. She also stated that the ultimate in accessibility is to get into a car and drive up and down. Ms. Lynch commented that moving the playground would not remove having to go down the stairs so it wouldn't address accessibility. Ms. Lynch commented that vandalism is not a reason to get rid of the road as you can still walk in or bike in to cause problems. If the road is open, then police can drive through – if it was closed that would not be possible.

Mike Casey commented that really appreciated Jodi's comments. He commented that vandalism will follow the road and noted whatever we do on the road needs to be sustainable. The rendering in the plan with grass looks like a wash out areas to him.

- Ms. Bringman replied that those drawings are just conceptual – if they were to come to reality planning would be involved for storm water management.

Rosemary Hampton commented vandalism is a major issue in east hillside as well and it is being addressed in Lilliput and Central Park by additional lighting. Is that part of the Lincoln Park Mini-Master Plan?

- Ms. Bringman replied that because we don't know what the plan is going to be the

plan doesn't include lighting.

- Ms. Luokkala replied that Parks doesn't generally light our more rustic park areas – like the Middle and North segments.
- Commissioner Hall replied that the plan does include additional lighting in the pavilion area.

Commissioner Wodash motioned to approve the Mini Master plan of Lincoln Park as a guide for park improvements. The Park Division to present for approval by the Commission further design development as funding is made available to accomplish improvements."

Commissioner Albright seconded the motion after asking the question of how to best incorporate Jodi Slick's comments regarding the Urban Land Institute's plan.

Commissioner Hall asked for Parks staff to make the Urban Land Institute's plan available to the public and that it is noted in the minutes of this meeting.

Commissioner Wodash motioned for approval of the Lincoln Park Mini-Master Plan; second by Commissioner Albright. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Lake Superior Zoo/Fairmount Park Site & Facilities Plan– Pat Janikowski, Consultant

Jim Filby Williams (City of Duluth), Diana Dodge (President, Lake Superior Zoo Society), Julene Boe (Interim Director, Lake Superior Zoo), Pat Janikowski (PJA), Brian Harjes (HGKI) introduced the project and presented the site revised plans.

The Mini-Master Plan presented distilled and incorporated comments from the public into the draft Mini-Master Plan. The plan will be posted on the website for comments through next Friday.

Next steps:

- February 22nd - The Mini-Master Plan will be presented again at the Committee of the Whole. After that meeting the Parks Commission will convene in order to take public comments.
- March 9 – presentation/ vote by Parks and Recreation Commission
- March 14 – presentation to City Council

The City and LSZ Society have gotten good feedback from the community and have incorporated comments into the process. The LSZ Society is excited about the plan and is looking for continued input regarding animals to include in the planning.

The Mini-Master Plan for nine acres of Lake Superior Zoo will keep the zoo out of the flood plain.

One of the changes in the Mini-Master Plan is that there is no separate play building. The indoor play is incorporated in to the renovation of the Main Building. An outdoor amphitheater is also included in the plan.

The site is difficult for ADA accessibility. The Mini-Master Plan incorporates ADA accessible paths throughout the Zoo.

The last Mini-Master Plan had included a large number of cats. We heard the feedback from the community to diversify this area in terms of animal collection. The focus may be a collection of cold weather Asian species.

A new brown bear exhibit will take the place of the old polar shores. The size of the brown bear exhibit meets the AZA requirements.

- The new exhibit will take advantage of the existing Polar Shores structure/exhibit and build on it in order to create the new exhibit.
- There will be a smaller pool & underwater viewing area for the bear.
- The design shows a cave that can provide shade for the bears and an opportunity for the public to look down into the cave from above.
- The exhibit will have an all soft substrate.

An accessible walkway will be added at the WPA Pavilion and an outdoor deck is shown to be adjacent to the WPA Pavilion.

The Animal Care Center is shown in the current location. The existing building works well. With the Zoo being nine acres, the distances that need to be traveled are not too great.

Details of the Forest Discovery Zone were presented.

- There are some areas that are "tbd" in order to provide flexibility and more input from the public.
- There are parallel play (learning) elements included in the design. There is a raised walkway incorporated.

Preliminary options for the main building were presented.

The goal of the renovation is to create a better entry and circulation, maximize staff efficiency.

There is a park area with plaza seating directly adjacent to the Zoo. The location will have a restroom, concession and picnic areas.

Commission comments:

- Heartened by the plans that were reached through consensus. There is an opportunity for more feedback.
- Could there be an amphitheater outside the Zoo?
 - Possibly could use sledding hill or other similar landform for amphitheater-like area
- Is there a catering kitchen included?
 - Catering kitchens could be incorporated into the plans. There could be a location in the main building to support birthday party needs.
- Commission would like to see good cost figures that align with phasing and funding sources.

Public comments:

Citizen - We like that there is some "open" and "to be determined" areas.

Citizen - Why is the park sneaking into the Zoo?

- the Zoo is on the east side of the river and the parks on the west. They are connected at a restroom/concessions area. There will be controlled access into the Zoo at this point.

Citizen – The Zoo should have better advertising for the winter – a lot of people don't realize that it is open.

Citizen – ADA accessibility is good for the Zoo. It is an interesting plan.

Citizen – Do you have to exit through the gift shop?

- Many locations have visitors exit through the gift shop to boost revenue but there are multiple options.

5. Commission Committees

A. Parks and Facilities –meeting date: TBA

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

B. Administrative (E-Board)–meeting date: 12:00 pm on 2/12 & 2/18 in the Parks office

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

Commissioner Hall: Lindsay Dean will work with Commissioner Crosby to coordinate a meeting between the Parks Commission and Commission on Disabilities after the Annual Meeting in April. The E-Board is hosting a special meeting on Friday February 12 to discuss the Park's 2016 grant plan. The E-Board will report back at the next meeting. The E-Board also discussed projects happening at Park Point, which will be brought to a future Parks Commission meeting.

C. Trails and Bikeways–meeting date: TBA

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

Commissioner Albright: the 2nd Cross City Trail Public Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 25.

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

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

E. Skyline Parkway Advisory Committee–meeting date: TBA

Chair –Patrick Contardo–[Dale Sellner]

Commissioner Contardo: the Advisory Committee has met twice.

6. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

7. New Business

A. Parks Annual Meeting – April 13 at Grand Ave Chalet

8. Old Business

A. Update on Hartley Park Mini-Master Plan

Lindsay Dean: At the end of January, the Court of Appeals dismissed the challenge to the City's implementation of Phase I of the Hartley Park Mini-Master Plan, so we are now moving forward with the projects associated with the \$600,000 legacy grant.

B. Update on U.S. Steel Negotiation

Jim Filby Williams: EPA has indicated that they hope to release a new final cleanup plan for US Steel within the next 3-4 weeks. If that occurs, the City would resume its discussions with US Steel and EPA about granting them permission to access the riverfront in order to restore it to an agreed upon condition. Our intent is to engage the community in the decision about the riverfront.

C. Update on St. Louis River Corridor

Lindsay Dean: Tomorrow is the 2nd Quarry Park Mini-Master Plan public meeting and February 25 is the 2nd Cross City Trail Mini-Master Plan public meeting.

9. Public Comments

Denette Lynch asked about the Neighborhood Park Mini-Master Plans.

- Lindsay Dean said she would follow up with Lisa Luokkala to find out when and how long they will be posted online.

10. Division Manager's Report

A. Recreation Management Software update. We received proposals from 7 vendors and we selected 4 to move forward with, who presented demonstrations last week. The Parks Division will make a decision on a vendor within the next week.

Commissioner Hall asked about the renaming of Lake Place Park. Jim Filby Williams said that the Indigenous Commission put forward a proposal to rename Lake Place Park as Gitche O'de Akiing, which means Grand Heart Place. We are now reaching out to other important community stakeholders to convey the proposal and solicit feedback.

11. Adjournment:

Commissioner Albright made a motion to adjourn, second by Commissioner Contardo, unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

12. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held **5 pm, Wednesday, March 9, at City Hall – Council Chambers.**

