



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA

Meeting Minutes of April 20, 2016

City Hall – Council Chambers
411 W 1st St



1. Call Meeting to Order

Meeting called to order at 5:02pm.

2. Roll Call

Present: Commissioners Hall, Torch, Schraepfer, Breeuwer, Holak, Schmidt, Contardo

Not Present: Commissioner Wodash, Crosby, Albright, Welles, and Councilor Sipress

3. Approval of March 9 minutes

Commissioner Contardo motioned for approval of the March 9, 2016, meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Breeuwer. Motion Carried

Commission Hall motioned for approval of the April 13, 2016, annual meeting agenda to serve as the minutes for the meeting; second by Commissioner Torch. Motioned Carried.

4. Presentations

A. Chester Park Chalet Project – Dave Schaeffer, Chester Bowl Improvement Club (action requested)

Mr. Dave Schaeffer, Chester Bowl Improvement Club (CBIC), provided an overview of the Chester Bowl Chalet project. He expressed need of chalet redesign for winter and summer activities, and current lack of energy efficiency.

Once a plan is completed and approved by the Commission (phase one) the second aspect of the process will need to be addressed: fundraising. Once 60-70 percent of funds are acquired transition to the public funding phase can commence.

LHB was hired and is conducting the design phase pro bono. Brandie and Steve, architects from LHB, created the new design. Built in the mid 70's, the current building has a basement and main floor with poured concrete walls lacking energy efficiencies. Steve described the constraints faced redesigning the chalet.

The new design includes reconfiguration of parking (including tenant parking), the addition of a fire pit, a bridge to cross the creek, a new deck, and a new building which remains in the footprint of the existing chalet.

The new building, having a Nordic/Northwood's themed exterior and designed for multi-seasonal use, is three levels. The basement will have insulation added to the exterior walls; ADA upgrades; and an addition for ski patrol storage, office, elevator, bathrooms, general storage and a mechanical room. All new exterior walls are planned for the main level which includes elevator access, a deck, expanded multi-purpose room(s), expanded concessions, a

meeting room, and a private stairwell for the apartment. The third level is an apartment with two bedrooms of equal size, an independent stair well, and open space above the multi-purpose room. The cost of the project is estimated at \$1 million.

Commissioner Holak:

Hopes the upgrades will allow more children to participate in summer programs.

Commissioner Contardo:

Will CBIC be responsible for the utilities and costs? Are there percentages on what the City will incur on the costs for the project?

Dave Schaeffer: The City has a 3-year agreement with CBIC for the management and operation of Chester Bowl. There has not yet been discussion regarding City contributions.

Commissioner Schmidt:

Commissioner Schmidt voiced concerns regarding general funding and City funding. He also questioned why having the apartment would continue with the new design.

Dave Schaeffer: Having renters decreases vandalism. They receive reduced rent for completing 20 volunteer hours for the park. They open the park at 6am and close the gate at 10pm.

Scott Myer, Chair of CBIC:

Mr. Myer expressed his support of the project and feels this will be a great improvement that will increase safety for all users of the building.

Commissioner Contardo motioned to accept and approve the planning and budget for the Chester Park Chalet Project; second by Commissioner Torch. Motion carried.

B. Quarry Park Mini-Master Plan – Lisa Luukkala, Project Coordinator (action requested)

Ms. Luukkala, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth, Parks and Recreation Division, and TKDA are partnering to creating a mini-master plan for Quarry Park. In the past year the park has gone from conception to a formalized plan.

A portion of the 30 acre site was County tax forfeited land; the remaining portion was purchased from Oneota Cemetery. Located next to Brewer Park, Quarry Park will allow more connectivity for the neighborhood and park users.

The park would be broken up into three phases, ranging from 1-2 years, 3-5 years and 6-10 years. The first phase deals with the climbing, ice farming, access to the park, disk golf, and safety issues. Phase two involves parking lot, gathering areas, and trail connections. Phase three would consider off leash dog and bouldering areas. Maintenance costs per year would be \$11,139 in total.

Plans include parking lot expansion, ADA accessibility of the main trail, formal hiking trail, multi-use trail, disc golf course, formal overlook, multiple kiosks and gathering spaces. Along the wall there will be an ice farming area for winter use and formal rock climbing throughout the

park. The emergency maintenance road will be widened and gated for use when needed. Management of the climbing wall will be placed on the Duluth Climbers Association.

The main goal of the plan is to maintain the rustic beauty of the park. There is overwhelming community support in regards to this park and its proposed uses.

Commissioner Torch:

Commissioner Torch requested more information regarding the ice climbing portion of the plan and the importance of the ice farming system.

Lucas Kramer (Duluth Climbers Coalition): Ice climbing has been taking place in the area for 40 years. The area naturally forms vertical ice along the walls of the quarry. Ice climbing is similar to rock climbing but you are climbing on ice. There are over 2 dozen climbing routes throughout the park. The 1000 foot wall has potential for having many more routes that could be added to the wall. This area has the capability to make Duluth a destination for ice climbing. Currently there is a lack of beginner routes during the winter so ice farming in those areas would allow for beginning level ice climbing.

Commissioner Hall:

What controls are planned for keeping people from climbing on their own?

It will be addressed through signage, as well as the development of a site management agreement between the City of Duluth and the Duluth Climbers Coalition.

Lisa Luukkala:

We've applied for two grants for Quarry Park this spring. We submitted an application to the Minnesota DNR for a \$100,000 Outdoor Recreation grant. Improvements funded by the total \$213,500 investment will include demo/trash removal, emergency access improvements, entrance gate, transformer/electrical drop, water storage pond, and ice climbing/farming. We also submitted an application to the Minnesota DNR for a \$90,680 Local Trail Connections grant. Improvements funded by the total \$121,680 investment will include connections from Quarry Park to the Superior Hiking Trail and Duluth Traverse Trail, ADA-accessible trail from the trailhead to Quarry Park, ADA-accessible walking loop trail, parking lot lighting, parking lot stormwater control, and standard amenities including trash receptacles, and wayfinding signage.

Commissioner Breeuwer:

Sandstone has an open climbing park owned by the City. The City should look to Sandstone on how to move forward and address safety issues. The ice farming will be able to bring many groups from across the Midwest.

Lisa Luukkala: Yes, we have already met with the City Administrator from Sandstone to learn about their best practices.

Commissioner Schmidt:

What projected impact does this new park have on near-by neighborhoods.

Lisa Luukkala: Many area residents have been using these trails informally and would

like to have the trails enhanced and formalized. 30 residents of the area hope to keep it rustic but they're glad it will become part of the park system, hopefully decreasing unwanted use.

Commissioner Contardo:

Why aren't we combining Quarry Park with Brewer and/or Bellevue Park?

Lisa Luukkala:

The community wants to keep the park's distinctiveness and retain the identity of the quarry.

Dave Pagel, Duluth Climbers Association:

See Mr. Pagel's comments included at the end of the minutes.

Denette Lynch:

Is concerned about off leash areas within the park.

Commissioner Schmidt:

Commissioner Schmidt would like more conversation with dog owners regarding off leash dog areas.

Commissioner Hall:

Commissioner Hall motioned to designate this area as a park and have it approved by the City Council, second by Commissioner Torch. Motion carried.

Commissioner Torch:

Motioned to support the Quarry Park plan; second by Commissioner Holak. Motion carried.

C. River Corridor Neighborhood Parks – Lisa Luukkala, Project Coordinator (informational)

Lisa Luukkala, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth, Parks and Recreation division, and Brian Harjes from HKGI. Many of the parks within the corridor have never had a formal master plan completed in the past, with the exception of Irving and Morgan Park. The mini-master plan for Midtown Park is being halted until after MNDOT's study on what will be done with the highway in that area.

Brian Harjes (HKGI):

The goal of this process is to have long range plans for these parks within the corridor and help with meeting the needs in the short term. This has allowed for the creation of a park feature database table that will be given to City staff.

Historical Park—improve access, formalize the fishing area and historical interpretation.

Fond du Lac Park—New park shelter, improve drainage, improve Mission Creek shoreline, formalize parking, trail connection and wayfinding.

Blackmer Park—improve parking, trail access and connection, river access, improve ball fields.

Smithville Park—formal path through the park and build a bridge over the creek to connect Blackmer and Munger landing. Improvements will be minimal to maintain passive landscape but increase awareness.

Riverside Park—add park shelter and restroom, improve play equipment, and add trail connections.

Norton Park—make the building ADA accessible, improve existing field drainage, create informal lawn area at abandoned hockey rink, and stream restoration.

Grassy Point—make general trail and boardwalk improvements, plant habitat and river restoration, canoe and kayak launch.

Keen Creek Park—add water at the dog park, add picnic facilities, improve Keene Creek banks, add cross City trailhead activity, repair damaged paved trails, overall park clean up.

Merritt Community Recreation Area—improve field drainage and condition of the ball field, establish hockey and broomball rink. The City will not invest in future building on the site. If a new building is constructed, funding would come from community partnerships.

Harrison Community Recreation Area—how to improve and enhance the quality of green space within the park and expand gathering areas for the community.

Piedmont Community Recreation Area—address storm water issues, expand parking, improve ball field and upper hockey rink, add more recreational opportunities, and improve trail accessibility within the park.

Commissioner Hall:

What is the total fall all 11 parks?

Just under 4 million dollars.

How will parks manage all of these mini master plans and fundraising?

Lisa Luukkala:

There will be a meeting with key stakeholders on how to build the capacity of the neighborhoods and how to meet the match required for the release of the half and half funding. Workshops will also be planned to help groups fundraise.

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: 4/21 at 12:00pm in the Parks office

Chair – Ed Hall – John Schmidt, Patrick Contardo [Lindsay Dean]

- C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: TBA
Chair – Tom Albright - Andy Holak, Tiersa Wodash, Tjaard Breeuwer, Art Johnston, [Judy Gibbs]
- 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]

6. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

7. New Business

8. Old Business

- A. Parks Commission Meetings – 2nd Wednesday in Council Chambers
- Will continue with the 2nd Wednesday of each
- B. Update on St. Louis River Corridor
- Lindsay—We submitted two grants for \$50,000 each to US Bank “Places to Play” for Lincoln Park and Irving Park for playgrounds. Both are finalists.

9. Division Manager's Report

- Public information meeting for Hartley Park mini-master plan implementation is scheduled for April 28th

10. Public Comment

11. Adjournment

- **Adjourned at 7:40**

12. Next meeting – Wednesday, May 11 at 5 pm in City Hall Council Chambers

ADDENDUM: Dave Pagel's Speech on Quarry Park:

I'm Dave Pagel, I'm a board member of the Duluth Climbers Coalition.

I've climbed at the quarry for nearly 40 years. If you'd have told me back in 1978 that one day in the future we'd be standing on the threshold of turning this habitual dumping ground and location for teenaged partying into a new city park with winter climbing as a major component, I'd have said, “Sure, although by then climbing will be moot because we'll all have personal jetpacks and flying cars.” And yet here we are, that future is here, and not a jetpack in sight!

I've watched over the years as the quarry has changed in terms of climbing, from a backwater secret fishing hole, to a regionally recognized ice climbing destination, and then as a whole new generation of climbers have worked to develop it into a mixed climbing mecca. But of course, through it all, access was always a question mark. Operating under a don't ask/don't tell model for recreation is never reassuring, but trying to make climbing here legit seemed too risky.

But it was the climbing community, specifically the DCC, that brought this proposal for a new city park forward; the way the political winds for outdoor recreation were blowing in this town made it seem possible that perhaps this was an idea whose time had finally come. We imagined it as a

climbing park, but we also recognized that there are a number of other stakeholders to whom this place is an important and even beloved recreational asset.

Thus as climbers, we are delighted to see a mini-master plan that envisions and includes a host of outdoor opportunities for folks of all ages, and we'd like to give a shout out to the people and businesses that have championed this proposal and the planning, and particularly our partners in the City administration and Parks & Rec department. Our own commitment to this ideal has been demonstrated by a grant we sought and received to help create a flat ADA-accessible main access trail into the quarry. As climbers, nothing could be less interesting to us; as proponents of Quarry Park as a park for everyone, nothing could be more important to us.

This past winter a longtime dream was realized as our climbing community hosted the first Duluth Ice & Mixed Fest at the quarry. It was incredible to see hundreds of climbers from all over the country descend upon Duluth to experience and enjoy this resource. But I think the most significant moment for me personally was looking out across the amphitheater during the event and seeing climbers scaling the walls, people trying out fat tire bikes for the first time, kids building snow forts and playing Frisbee, and ordinary folks just walking around checking it all out while getting themselves and their dogs a little exercise. And I thought, today for the first day ever, this place is a park.

Now, with the adoption of this mini-master plan, this formerly problematic and abandoned industrial site will be a nexus for diverse forms of outdoor recreation, a true park in every sense of the word—and not just for a day.