



# PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA

Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2017



City Hall – Council Chambers  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St

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## I. Call Meeting to Order

President Schmidt called the meeting to order at 5:05pm.

## II. Roll Call

Present: Dean Vogtman, Erik Torch, John Schmidt, Amanda Crosby, Tjaard Breeuwer, Jon Welles, Tiersa Wodash, Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison), Art Johnson (ISD 709 Liaison), Alanna Oswald (ISD 709 Alternate)

Absent: Ed Hall, Michael Schraepfer

## III. Approval of Previous Meetings' Minutes

Commissioner Torch motioned for approval of January 11, 2017 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Welles. Unanimously approved.

President Schmidt introduced Em Westerlund and Alanna Oswald.

## IV. Presentations

### A. Update from Planning Division – Adam Fulton, City of Duluth (informational)

Mr. Fulton, Community Planning Manager, City of Duluth presented the community planning update, which he noted includes a great deal regarding parks.

Fulton: Explained a survey went out to track community wants, which included a question about outdoor recreation. Further explained Community Planning is working on new guiding principles, including adding one on health and one on fairness, which are still open for commentary. Shared maps of data, including neighborhood to park connectivity and traffic volumes, noting Piedmont ski trail has no trail or sidewalk access and west Duluth does have open space but raised the question of whether residents have access to it. Further explained that open space is one of five main areas, with a chapter and focus group dedicated to it. Noted their goal of determining what to do with tax forfeit land.

Torch: Raised question regarding tax forfeit land and next steps the City is taking.

Fulton: Informed that 47% of city land is not taxable, emphasizing how big this number is, including a lot of it being parks and tax forfeit land. Shared that they know about land like Piedmont should be acquired and that 17% of land is tax forfeit. Shared the following important dates and planning efforts:

- February 15, 2017 at 8:30am-Imagine Canal Park, Canal Park Lodge
- February 15, 2017 at 4:00- Vision Committee, Duluth Depot

- March 9, 2017 at 5:00pm-Open Space Focus Group, Bagley Nature Center at UMD
- Boundary Avenue land use study
- Hotel construction city-wide (adding 350 rooms this year)
- Washington Center Kitchen
- Community Development Committee recommended funds for Irving and Lincoln Park
- Vacation rentals (nearing cap of 60)
- Spirit Mountain Recreation Authority Master Plan

Johnston: Questioned the surveys attention to trails and why no questions regarding ATVs or snowmobiles were included.

Fulton: Confirmed it would have been under “other” and offered to give Johnston the data.

B. Lincoln Park Super Bowl Grant – Lisa Luokkala, City of Duluth (informational).

Ms. Luokkala, Parks and Recreation Project Coordinator, City of Duluth expressed her excitement in providing an update on the plans implementation.

Luokkala: Shared that the Lincoln Park plan passed about a year ago and Parks & Recreation is now pursuing Duluth Places to Play grant, noting \$550,000 from ½ and ½ will be utilized for Phase 1 of the Master Plan. Shared that US Bank granted \$50,000 from their Super Bowl Legacy fund, leveraging additional dollars. Shared a map of Lincoln Park and surrounding neighborhood while explaining their work with community groups on the Master Plan, with a great emphasis on health. Noted the support received from businesses and residents and the following challenges that face Lincoln Park as:

- Poverty- 37% of residents, 50% of children
- Poor health of residents in neighborhood

Luokkala: Noted that green space is an amazing way to address health and that people are using the park and the Superior Hiking Trail and Duluth Traverse, however intentional programming is a goal. Further expressed parks as critical to neighborhood health, however they must be in good condition, perceived as safe and programmed. Noted the following key points regarding Lincoln Park:

- Heavily used, severe flood damage in 2012, vandalism issues
- Proposing \$1.7M renovation of park, including road closure and new parking
- Phase 1 is \$880,000, which includes new playgrounds, pavilion restoration and pathways/landscaping
- Campaign includes \$40,000 for programming provided by Lincoln Park Child and Family Collaborative; mix of recreation, culture and arts
- More accurate numbers will be available once design is complete
- Current fundraising to be completed in February, design and engineering in April, ready for bid in May for fall 2017 construction

Wodash: Questioned if the trail along east side of the creek will be restored in phase 1.

Luokkala: Confirmed no work on natural surface trail in Phase 1, rather the south segment, with future



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phases including trail improvements.

Wodash: Requested information regarding the local entrances at 6<sup>th</sup> Street and questioned if they would be restored.

Luukkala: Confirmed not likely in Phase 1 as it focuses on the park from Elephant Rock south to the main entrance.

Vogtman: Asked about converting the upper road into a walking trail.

Luukkala: Explained the MMP called for a pilot study to test seasonal gating on the road and confirmed the pilot has not yet started.

Johnston: Questioned from the school perspective what fundraising would look like.

Luukkala: Explained that Mayor Larson has taken particular interest in in this park as part of her interest in equity and that if US Bank continues their support by engaging a small group of potential donors, primarily local businesses, it will increase success.

Johnston: Requested information regarding volunteer support.

Luukkala: Confirmed that volunteer stewardship will be engaged.

Torch: Confirmed Northland Foundation already contributed to the campaign and sees the value of youth programming.

Schmidt: Proposed that as the group looks forward, watching for programming and the amount provided to see where funds should be added will be important as the user groups that do presentations for the Commission are important and provide a good outlet to focus attention on neighborhoods that don't have access to our parks.

Luukkala: Explained that Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative and the Boys and Girls Club are engaged.

Schmidt: Mentioned the school being pulled from that neighborhood and would like to reinforce the notion of working with the School District.

Luukkala: Confirmed they will be working with the Principal.

Bill Lynch (Public): Shared that in the last Master Plan the upper road was going to be a one-way with hiking and biking on one side and questioned who decided to close it.

Luukkala: Explained that the plan called for a study and that this is a city roadway therefore working with Engineering to understand the impact on the roadway is necessary.

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Bill Lynch (Public): Shared opinion that parks are for all citizens and not everyone is walking or biking up the hill.

Luukkala: Expressed that vehicle access to the park is associated with vandalism and this test would show if the road closure would mitigate the vandalism.

Denette Lynch (Public): Shared that she noticed there was a sign saying Duluth Traverse was established by COGGS and that the slide regarding the road closure didn't show a study just that the road would be closed. Further stated that the current plan called for \$345,000 for playground but \$275,000 in the Master Plan.

Luukkala: Explained this included design and contingency instead of that being a separate line item.

## C. Cross City Trail Mini-Master Plan - Lisa Luukkala, City of Duluth (informational)

Ms. Luukkala, Parks and Recreation Project Coordinator, City of Duluth expressed excitement in sharing the status of the Cross City Trail.

Luukkala: Explained the Master Plan is in the final draft stages and they anticipate the final draft to be posted this Friday for a two-week public review period, followed by Trails Committee review and Parks Commission approval in March. Read aloud the Master Plan's vision statement and provided brief history and information regarding the Master Planning process which started June 2015 with research and the first public meeting November of 2015. Explained that assessing the feasibility of alignment has been ongoing since June 2016. Shared the plans guiding principles:

- Connect the community
- Provide high quality user experience that is unique to Duluth
- Provide a safe trail experience, ADA accessible
- Ensure technical and economic feasibility
- Be environmentally sustainable
- Promote economic development

Luukkala: Explained phase 2A is planned for 2017-18 construction and phase 3 and 4 will be informed by the WPAN/brownfield revitalization survey. Further explained that phase 4B is a long-term goal along BN rail corridor, with hopes to complete phase 4A in 2018 alongside the zoo. Shared that phase 5 is an interim connection between the zoo and Spirit Mountain which is a minimal cost natural surface trail with significant costs for bridging that does not yet have an identified funding source.

Vogtman: Questioned phase 1 and it being a can of worm's construction, questioning if construction will affect the trail.

Luukkala: Confirmed that it may, however they are unsure exactly how it will but they will work with MnDot as their plans advance.

Torch: Questioned the plan regarding Spirit Mountain and the rationale behind connection to Spirit.



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Luukkala: Pointed to large scale map and explained the long-term goal of loops connecting Munger and DWP and CCT trails with up and down connectors, as well as creating infrastructure not only for Duluth but Proctor and Hermantown.

Westerlund: Questioned the difference between trail center and trail heads and what the amenities are.

Luukkala: Confirmed that trail centers have increased amenities like Spirit Mountain Chalet with bathrooms as well as more signage and trail information. Explained that trail heads are smaller versions with smaller signage.

Oswald: Asked about Lincoln Park Middle School and how its abandoned by trail connections.

Luukkala: Noted the Safe Routes to School Plan, with recommendations for route improvements. Further explained that the Duluth Traverse is directly behind Lincoln Park Middle School and is used by walkers and bikers, but on road connections fall out of the jurisdiction of parks. Expressed she would be happy to come to a meeting.

Oswald: Explained that Safe Routes to School has identified the need to get over the Railroad tracks to connect with Wheeler.

Luukkala: Explained that the SLRC trails plan was updated to include all trails and she would be happy to go through the plans.

Johnston: Returned conversation back to Spirit Mountain and the last section going to to the chalet looking like a four pipe trail, which is quite steep.

Luukkala: Explained this is an interim solution to use the maintenance road with long term solution to either pave the road or build an adjacent trail as the terrain definitely poses some challenges.

Breeuwer: Questioned if the upper Zoo to Spirit connection is one of only a few accessible loop options.

Luukkala: Explained that railroad grade does have significant bridge issues to make it an accessible trail.

Mike Casey (Friends of Western Duluth Parks and Trails): Explained their group has been heavily involved in the CCT as the Oberstar funding vision was to use lower BN tracks for long-term phasing. Expressed that Spirit Mountain connection wasn't in the last survey and they're concerned about phasing and whether that lower loop is the true community connection. Further described that the upper route had no community input and questioned where Hermantown is planning to connect.

Luukkala: Explained they do have Hermantown's master plan which calls for two different connections.



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Mike Casey: Explained the connection from the bridge over Keene Creek, going up 59<sup>th</sup> to Grand Avenue as unsafe and that they're glad WPAN is involved as the earlier the input the better. Suggested that connection to Keene from phase 3 could be on an Avenue along west side of the creek. Touched on the economic factors of the BN route and if the tracks can be removed it might be a good example of a cheap connection.

Vogtman: Questioned if the lower route Mike Casey is referring to could be shown on the map.

Luokkala: Showed lower loop on the map and explained they are working with Business Development on a planning project, where the Contractor will be Perkins+Will and the subcontractor Toole design, who too will have guidance on the routing.

## D. Signage & Wayfinding Plan – Andrew Slade, City of Duluth (informational)

Mr. Slade, Parks and Recreation Assistant Manager, City of Duluth provided an update on the Signage and Wayfinding plan.

Slade: Explained the Signage and Wayfinding plan is in the final stages and the consultants have come up with some exemplary designs. Further explained the intent to have a comprehensive inventory of our current signage locations and that the group has gone through a very effective value engineering process. Stated that a document was handed out that will guide through the implementation strategy and the hope is to come back in March for Commission approval, with sign designs and an initial build out of Chambers and the CCT as well as a guiding policy or narrative document. Informed that the plan calls for a 10-15 year build out with new signs to be installed as new projects are completed, with Chambers Grove Park being a good example. Signs that are broken or vandalized would also be replaced with new signs. Expressed the top priorities are safety concerns, such as illegal vehicle use. Noted that within the ½ and ½ tourism tax there is money set aside for signage in the River Corridor. Implementation at Quarry Park and better wayfinding at Hartley Park are important.

Breeuwer: Expressed that the narrative is missing the signs that aren't in parks.

Slade: Explained the signage plan includes those signs and can be added to the narrative as well if it's unclear. Described the funding mechanisms as the ½ and ½ tax for SLRC projects and about \$270,000 remaining for signage specifically. Further described the Park Maintenance budget has limited opportunity to fund sign replacement and gate installation, however user groups are also stepping forward to put up signs on trails in partnership with the City. Described the possibility of using Parks Fund capital money and setting a 2-5% project budget aside for signage and looking into outside grant funding sources.

Johnston: Questioned if the plan included gates.

Slade: Confirmed that the final document from the consultant will include gate locations and the plan will be available on the website.



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Schmidt: Questioned if it was currently on the website.

Slade: Confirmed not at this time.

Schmidt: Requested clarification if the wayfinding signs that tell you how to get to a park from the street will also be the new design.

Slade: Confirmed yes.

Breeuwer: Noted that the consultants came up with different graphic layouts and asked for public feedback, however the design that was chosen is closer to the existing signs than some of the other design options.

Denette Lynch (Public): Expressed appreciation for the efforts to get people into the parks and having them match, but questioned if it was going to create a 10-15 year hodgepodge of signage. Further expressed desire that the City keep old directional signs as they match state and national recreation signs with the brown background and white letters. Shared that the new steel blue and gray signs don't match the state and national recreational signs and asked if there would be consideration in keeping the old directional signs and having some of the ½ and ½ tax allocation go towards directional signs to get you into the parks.

Slade: Explained the plan will be brought forward for a vote at the March Parks Commission meeting and Stakeholders will be notified when the plan is posted online.

## V. Commission Committees

- A. Parks and Facilities – meeting date: TBA  
Chair - Michael Schraepfer – Jon Welles, Ed Hall, John Schmidt [Dale Sellner]
- B. Administrative (E-Board) – meeting date: 2/17 at 12:00pm in the Parks office  
Chair – John Schmidt – Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby [Lindsay Dean]
- C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: Late February TBD  
Chair – Tjaard Breeuwer– Tiersa Wodash, Art Johnston, Mike Casey, Eric Viken, Shawna Mullen [Andrew Slade]
- D. Recreation Programming (youth and adult) – meeting date: TBA  
Chair - Jon Welles – Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby, Dean Vogtman [Pamela Page]

## VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

## VII. New Business

- A. Parks Commission Special Meeting in April

Slade: Shared that with the number of Mini Master plans in progress and the many steps that lead up to Parks Commission approval, including public and stakeholder input and review by the trails committee as well as submission for legacy funding a council approved plan is needed by the end of April. Explained the focus on the Duluth Traverse Master Plan and having it council approved by the



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end of April, therefore they will arrange for a special Parks Commission meeting on Tuesday April 11, 2017 at 5:00pm

Dean: Shared the they will work to secure the Council Chambers for this special meeting on April 11.

## B. 2017 Park Construction Projects

Slade: Shared the intent to make a 2017 construction projects list publicly available as soon as it's finished.

## VIII. Old Business

### A. Update on Grant Awards and Applications

Slade: Expressed that it's a very busy time for grant applications.

### B. Update on St. Louis River Corridor Plans

Slade: Shared the WWFT public meeting has been postponed as additional information and input is needed. Explained that an online survey as well as direction from Mayor Larson determined it was necessary to get more information from residents of Council District 5.

## IX. Division Manager's Report

Slade: Explained they are moving forward with an update to the Lower Chester Mini Master Plan and the City has an agreement with Neighbors of Lower Chester, noting the park has also become home to Congdon Hockey, therefore a need to find common ground and accommodation for both the hockey program and neighborhood interest for a four season park is of importance. Shared that the process will start in February and a local landscape architecture firm will be utilized to understand best practices in turf management.

Schmidt: Shared that Neighbors of Lower Chester Park Community Club has a meeting next Thursday and it would be helpful to have a representative there.

## X. Public Comment

Mike Casey: Discussed the CCT pinch point at Verso and that he was impressed with the work the City has done at Verso. Requested surveys be made available at libraries so people know it's going on and more than one household member can participate. Impressed to hear about the telephone survey, especially after 15 hours of stakeholder meetings which required vacation and flex time at work. Expressed opinion that having three-way communication would be better, noting staff seems overtaxed based on miscommunication.

Johnston: Resumed attention to the #6 liaison reports that they are replacing tire mulch at playgrounds next fall, noting that it is an expensive proposition and they are looking for volunteer opportunities.





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Oswald: Stated that the parent group that advocated for this is raising funds for the costs, targeting \$50,000 through Generosity.com, which is sponsored by Conservation Minnesota. Informed that the District has been hesitant to involve volunteers, and she is looking for ideas about how to involve volunteers as it will be \$600,000 remove/replace material from eleven playgrounds.

## **XI. Adjournment**

Meeting adjournment. Moved by Torch, second by Wodash.

## **XII. Next meeting**

The next meeting will be Wednesday March 8, 2017 in the City Council Chambers.