



# PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA

Meeting Minutes of March 8, 2017



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

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## I. Call Meeting to Order

Commissioner Amanda Crosby called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

## II. Roll Call

Present: Dean Vogtman, Ed Hall, Amanda Crosby, JC Welles, Tjaard Breewuer, Michael Schraepfer, Tiersa Wodash, Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison), Art Johnson (ISD 709 Liaison), Alanna Oswald (ISD 709 Alternate)

Absent: John Schmidt, Erik Torch

## III. Approval of Previous Meetings' Minutes

Commissioner Hall motioned for approval of February 8, 2017 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Welles. Unanimously approved.

## IV. Presentations

A. Cross City Trail Mini-Master Plan – Lisa Luokkala, City of Duluth (action requested)

Ms. Luokkala, Project Coordinator, City of Duluth presented the Cross City Trail Mini-Master Plan.

Luokkala: Presented highlights of the trail plan, including the corridor and regional significance, noting the plan would fill a critical gap in the state trails and provide a route for US 47. Further explained the goal in getting designation for future Legacy funding. Described why the trail is regionally significant and how it connects neighborhoods with non-motorized access to the downtown area, while connecting the downtown tourism district with the St. Louis River corridor tourism recreational area. Further described connection with Munger Trail, Proctor, Hermantown and the nearly connected Gitchi Gami State Trail. Informed of planning process thus far:

- Started in 2004
- Master planning began late 2015
- Different corridors and alternatives were explored
- Preferred alignment (River Route) developed
- Over 300 people attended community engagement events

Luokkala: Explained the final alignment had to take into account topography over land, especially if the goal is accessible trail. Further explained that six segments of trail were looked at for topography, land-use issues, safe crossings, etc. Provided background on Master planning process for Duluth, which develops guiding principles early on, with the Cross-City Trail having six; connect community, provide high quality user experience unique to Duluth, provide safe travel experience for users of all ages and abilities, ensure technical and economic feasibility, be environmentally sustainable, promote economic development. Noted current demographic trends and increasing bike ridership which supports this plan while providing economic development, tourism opportunities and



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increased connectivity. Presented sections of plan in further detail.

Vogtman: Thanked Ms. Luokkala and presented question about illegal ATV use and whether any plans to deal with that are developed.

Luokkala: Encouraged people to call 911 when they see illegal use and also suggested using bollards to discourage use of existing trail.

Westerlund: Questioned if the uncertainty of 5-10 year schedule hinders the trail designation.

Lisa: Confirmed that a lack of funding does not deter designation, noting that some communities get designation without even a full design and Duluth is in a good position.

Hall: Drew attention to bottom paragraph on page 43, pointing out continuing issue of covering maintenance of new trails in annual operating budget.

Luokkala: Encouraged a "Friends of CCT" group to help with annual costs.

Hall: Noted that much like garden group volunteers, we can't count on volunteer support expanding for maintenance requirements.

Mike Casey (Friends of Western Duluth Parks and Trails): Shared that one of the groups goals is to become a volunteer group helping on trails, noting this is a momentous day for the City of Duluth. Expressed how happy he is to see the plan finally moving forward, unlike with previous administrations. Noted the energy from the public in working through the plan and that Spirit Mountain and the lower route are not a priority for the public. Expressed desire to see budget numbers for lower parcels in plan, but doesn't want to impede the process. Also noted keeping an eye on the Keene Creek connection and "bridge to nowhere", expressing approval of WPAN process involved. Noted the lack of mention of plowing in the plan.

Dwight Morrison (public): Explained as a retired teacher in architecture, math and science, he tries to be a disability advocate when possible. Further explained he's followed the plan for two to three years and the language has been "accessible", which is very positive. Noted there are segments in the plan that haven't been made accessible, a total of 2.5 miles, with a segment through the Zoo impossible and the section at Spirit Mountain a quick ride down. Explained that unlike Snap Chat, this plan is not going away but appears to have gone through a strong review. Emphasized that a good engineer will come up with an accessible plan for just about any place, using Skyline Drive as an example that takes a level path through a scenic area. Recommended a serious look at the Spirit Mountain segment because it has real problems and should have ADA as a minimum, not maximum. Expressed concern if this segment gets lost in the shuffle.

Luokkala: Confirmed the challenging topography and noted the vast majority of trail exceeds ADA standards, balancing environmental impact and accessibility. Provided example of the switchbacks



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through Fairmount Park and how these would impact conifer trees, noting that Master Plans are not full design. Went on to explain the River Route has been ground trothed and they are confident in their ability to find an alignment from the upper Zoo to Western Waterfront. Noted pinch point at Knowlton Creek, due to 2012 flood, and that ADA accessible trail would greatly exceed City's funding ability, with connection to the Lower Chalet via Munger Trail instead.

Dwight Morrison (public): Expressed willingness to donate time in planning help because he thinks it can be time.

Westerlund: Questioned if accessibility and universal design will be part of the public review process as each of the segments get funded and designed.

Luukkala: Confirmed yes.

Westerlund: Noted that once money and engineering secured this topic should be revisited.

Mike Casey (Friends of Western Duluth Parks and Trails): Noted the importance of understanding the history of the Cross City Trail, with the first principal being to connect western side of Duluth with eastern. Drew attention to the orange line on page 31 being the original vision and previous administration moving the conversation to 6<sup>th</sup> street, whereas lower route is truly everyone's vision.

Denette Lynch (public): Shared that it could be made all ADA if you simply used the orange route, which would solve the problem of crossing Grand Ave.

Breeuwer: Shared that the Trails Committee reviewed the draft plan in light of the public comments, however they believe the comments were incorporated and this is one of Duluth's only accessible trails. Further explained the language was changed to include a stronger commitment to exceed ADA standards, with the one exception of segment V. Further shared the Trails Committee's desire to have fellow Councilors support this plan because it addresses comments brought up today and previously, giving a clear direction to move forward. Thanked Lisa Luukkala and Andrew Slade for their hard work and professionalism.

Jim Filby Williams: Shared that he respectfully and empathetically disagreed with Mr. Morrison's assessment of City staff, noting that a licensed architect and professional planner are working on this project and the degree to which the plan is accessible is due to their hours of work and diligence.

Wodash: Questioned what wayfinding design will look like.

Luukkala: Confirmed that HKGI is working on this plan and on the wayfinding design, which will include mile markers, direction signage at major intersections, and urban forms of wayfinding in places like Lincoln Park. Further explained the hope of having a continuous feel through all park systems.



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Vogtman: Requested clarification on the lower trail issue and if it pertained to land issues.

Luukkala: Explained that BN rail corridor is still owned by BN, so they have not proceeded. Further explained the larger planning process of the Irving and Fairmont neighborhoods, noting a small area plan being completed for this area including transportation and land use.

Vogtman: Shared that western residents will use the Lower Route to bike to the grocery store.

Luukkala: Confirmed the Lower Route as the speedier option.

Vogtman: Questioned when the traffic signal at the base of Spirit Mountain will be installed.

Luukkala: Confirmed installation for later in 2017.

**MOTION/Second:** Breeuwer/Welles to approve the Cross City Trail Mini-master Plan. Unanimously approved.

B. Duluth Traverse Mini-Master Plan Update – Jim Shoberg, Parks and Recreation (informational).

Mr. Shoberg, Parks and Recreation Project Coordinator, City of Duluth provided a project update.

Shoberg: Explained the mini-master plan is called a Management Plan because the trail is 84 miles completed out of 100 miles planned, making it worthy of a unique process. Noted the team includes Kay-Linn and Applied Trails as content specialists with Confluence being the overall planning consultant. Noted the following process highlights:

- First public meeting was February 9, 2017
- To date, nearly 1000 comments (425 survey respondents, 500 internet mapping respondents 60 phone or email comments)
- MMP goal is to complete the DT and provide an operations and management plan.
- Team currently working through comments
- Goal is a draft plan by March 17<sup>th</sup>, followed by a two-week comment period

Shoberg: Reads through vision statement and references key points, before reviewing funding, guiding principles and social pinpoints.

Westerlund: Questioned if social pinpoint will remain open through the public comment period.

Shoberg: Confirmed yes and that COGGS will take it over after this planning process for DT users to submit timely comments.

Westerlund: Questioned if the URL for the questionnaire could be shortened.

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Shoberg: Recommended directing users to main parks page.

Westerlund: Questioned if a word was missing on guiding principle six, pertaining to sustainability.

Vogtman: Questioned if it was open to walkers and hikers too.

Shoberg: Confirmed yes, but noted a different experience for hikers because it is built for bikers. Shared that bikers are supposed to yield for hikers, but the social norm here would be hikers yield.

Schraepfer: Questioned how that will work.

Shoberg: Shared that it will be an education tool, where hikers have the right of way, but bikers will be traveling at faster speeds.

Art Johnston (speaking as citizen, not as School Board liaison): Shared that as a resident from Upper Smithville he lives on the DWP and has been involved in the Duluth Traverse as a school board representative and member of COGGS, receiving a notice for a public meeting that mentioned mountain biking, walking and skiing. Expressed the neighborhood has had issues with motorized use on the trail, of which has decreased in the last 6-8 years. Noted the discussion from the February 8 meeting talked about human powered users, however the questionnaire asked about snowmobile interaction on the DT. Questioned why the City and COGGS are supporting this being turned into a snowmobile trail. Shared that Trails Committee members said funds to rebuild the western part of the DWP are needed but the Committee did not agree on the issue. Expressed concern that there is a CCT plan, Water Trail plan, SLRC trails plan; however, they don't overlay. Requested proper notice to neighbors that this is a potential snowmobile trail, noting the close proximity of the Munger Trail and the misleading information that has been given to the public.

Shoberg: Explained there are multiple segments of the DT that have motorized uses, such as the street sections. Further explain the DWP is a candidate for the DT because it's the only area through the Magney Snively natural area. Confirmed that yes the DT is for human powered uses and there are segments that may have other uses like equestrian. Noted the 10mph speed limit.

Breeuwer: Agreed with Art Johnston that there is confusion of the name of this plan. Realized in the SLRC plan the Trails Committee moved the decision into this plan. Expressed desire to have the City do as much as they can to get clear direction from the public about the DWP and snowmobiles.

Wodash: Questioned if maps could be used to show where multiple uses are planned.

Shoberg: Confirmed that there will be a section in the plan about shared use on the DWP.

Denette Lynch (public): Complimented the community meeting process before the draft and the email received sharing the survey links after the community meeting.



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Jim Filby Williams: Shared reminder that west Duluth residents are enthusiastic snowmobilers and the survey showed the desire of residents in west Duluth to support snowmobile trails in higher parts of the town. Explained the long-term view that everyone is at risk of losing all access to it, with \$2 million in work needed and many co-investors. Further explained that all users must get access, or no one gets access, as a \$500,000 request is not possible without matching dollars committed to snowmobiles.

C. Signage & Wayfinding Plan – Andrew Slade, Parks and Recreation (action requested)

Mr. Slade, Parks and Recreation Assistant Manager, City of Duluth shared project update.

Slade: Shared that the group is reaching the end of a complex planning process of upgrading the City's signage and wayfinding system. Noted the final plan document he is sharing is also available on the City website. Presented plan goals as ensure public safety, find our resources, and understand particular uses of public spaces, with the hope that the signs will get you from the street into the park and from there kiosks with additional information will be available as well as smaller signs at trail junctions and trailblazer signs. Explained the plan calls for a 10-15 year buildout and incorporates regulatory signs, focusing on uses that are permitted as opposed to uses that are disallowed. Plan includes the following:

- Clear graphic standards of trail difficulty
- DXC and COGGS will provide trail maps
- Gates are part of the plan where signage fails and physical barriers are necessary (noting Magney Snively as important site for installation)
- Old signs will be replaced by new signage as they wear out
- Funding will come from ½ and ½ tax (approximately \$270,000)
- After Parks Commission approval will go before City Council
- Chambers Grove signage tentatively slated for this spring.

Hall: Expressed excitement for this plan that has been a long time in the making.

Schraepfer: Questioned how long implementation will take.

Slade: Estimated 10-15 years.

Bill Lynch (public): Shared that the signs on the street are blue and that MnDot requires recreational signs to be brown and white.

**MOTION/Second:** Vogtman/Schraepfer to approve the Signage & Wayfinding master Plan. Unanimously approved.

D. Recreation Management Software – Lindsay Dean, Parks and Recreation (informational)

Ms. Dean, Parks and Recreation Manager, City of Duluth presented new software launch information.



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Dean: Explained that a request for proposal for a new software system went out fall of 2015, where five finalists were interviewed with Rec 1 being the final pick. Further explained that until last year, the system was exclusively pen and paper and cash or check payment, but with this new system, users can view park availability online, search amenities and obtain a permit. Shared that typically there are two time slots per day, or all day reservations. Users can pay by credit card online and receive permits via email. Softball and flag football leagues will also have online registration capability.

Wodash: Questioned if there is an option to see park availability on a map.

Dean: Shared that they received similar feedback from a citizen and that there is not currently a great map function, however they are working towards more robust map functions.

Schraepfer: Questioned if it has a calendar view of availability.

Dean: Confirmed yes.

## 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: 3/16 at 12:00pm in the Parks office  
Chair – John Schmidt – Erik Torch, Amanda Crosby [Lindsay Dean]
- C. Trails and Bikeways – meeting date: 3/1 at 7:30pm & 3/30 at 6:00pm in City Hall  
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 on April 11 in City Hall Conference Room 403

Lindsay confirmed this meeting and the topic of the Duluth Traverse Master Plan.

- B. Parks Commission Annual Meeting on April 12 at Grand Avenue Chalet.

Volunteers needed to staff the sign-in table and greet meeting attendees.

## VIII. Old Business

- A. 2017 Park Construction Projects

Slade: Shared final list of 2017 construction projects, noting the extensive process used to identify the number of projects that can be realistically executed in partnership with Properties and Facilities



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Management. Explained that projects range from a hiking loop at Spirit Mountain to the Cross City Trail River Route.

Crosby: Thanked Lindsay Dean for her service as Parks and Recreation Manager as this will be her last Commission meeting.

## IX. Division Manager's Report

### X. Public Comment

Denette Lynch: Noted the helpfulness of the SLRC Trails updates for the Friends of Western Duluth Trails.

Judy Hubbert: Shared that she is here to speak on Ely's Peak ski trail and it being closed in 2011 with plans to open the trail put off until 2017. Explained that Mike Riter identified 1400 feet of trail that needed work and the City plans to harden miles of trail according to the December 2014 resolution. Shared concern that Magney Natural plan says not to harden trail and that it invites users that shouldn't be there, like ATVs. Shared study done by Dr. Seth Gower that showed the soil is well drained and appropriate for horses. Requested that the Parks Commission support efforts to stop this trail from going in as designed.

Jim Filby Williams: Mentioned that plan with budget will be ready next week and it will decide whether to build for a small group of current users or larger group of new user and whether they can build a trail that can't be used when it's wet.

Judy Hubbert: Expressed that these were originally logging trails that saw endurance races and never any damage. Noted Dr. Seth Gower's report notes on drainage and bedrock, with some areas being very wet. Questioned if more use is going to happen to this isolated area.

Jim Filby Williams: Confirmed that the management plan specifically calls for this use to be monitored and adjusted. Shared that monitoring or metering usage is not out of the question as trail preservation is important.

Andy Webb (public): Shared that as a volunteer with LSMR, he would like to make a short presentation to the Parks Commission board prior to any decision made on the WWFT.

## XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjournment. Moved by Torch, second by Welles.

## XII. Next meeting

The next meeting will be Tuesday April 11, 2017 at 5pm in the City Hall Conference Room 403.

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