



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of August 14, 2019  
Parks & Recreation Annual Meeting

City Hall – Council Chambers



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### I. Call Meeting to Order

President Crosby called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

### II. Roll Call

Present: Amanda Crosby, Jill Joyce, Dennis Isernhagen, David Demmer, Jenny Peterson.

Not present: Erik Torch, Tjaard Breeuwer, Dudley Edmondson, Britt Rohrbaugh, David Kirby (ISD 709 School Board Liaison), Frank Jewell (St. Louis County Board Liaison), Em Westerlund (City Council Liaison).

### III. Approval of July 10th Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Peterson motioned for approval of the July 10 meeting minutes; second by Commissioner Isernhagen. Unanimously approved.

### IV. Presentations

#### A. Meet the New Parks Permit Coordinator (Informational) – Jessica Peterson, Manager

Peterson introduced the new Parks Permit Coordinator, Chris Severson. Reflected on Severson's background, which includes a Bachelor's Degree in Human Development and Family Studies from University of Wisconsin-Stout and a Masters in Recreation Administration from University of Nebraska-Omaha. Stated Severson's work experience includes holding a Recreation Specialist position in Yellowstone National Park, 10 years as a District Manager with Conservation Corps Minnesota as well as the Finance Associate and Rental Center Manager in the Recreation Sports and Outdoor Program at UMD. Highlighted Severson has a background in drafting and processing contracts, training/event planning and project management. Shared Severson has lived in Duluth for 5 years and grateful to be working for Duluth Parks and Recreation Division.

#### B. Chester Park Shared Use Ski Trail Recommendations (For Future Action) – Matt Andrews, Trails Coordinator

Andrews reflected on the history of the process, stated the Mini-Master Plan for Chester Park was approved in November 2019, while the Ski Mini Master Plan was approved in May 2015. Mentioned the shared use trail trial period, which allowed pedestrians to use the cross-country ski trails at Chester Park. Indicated the plan states if the two users cannot co-exist, the City will bring a recommendation to the Parks and Recreation Commission on or before June 1, 2017 to build a separate parallel pedestrian trail or limit Nordic skiing at all major parts of Chester. Stated the Parks and Recreation Manager extended this trail period through 2019 to further evaluate shared use on the trails.



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of August 14, 2019  
Parks & Recreation Annual Meeting

City Hall – Council Chambers



Indicated trail cameras were installed to study the types of uses on the trails. Shared the timeline of the planning process and the meetings that took place with stakeholders. Reflected on the public user survey that was distributed during 2017-2018 ski season, which were for all user types. Noted it was almost split 50/50 for walkers and skiers who took the survey. Mentioned the key takeaways from the survey results being

- Over 50% of respondents agree that a packed/groomed surface is an important reason they use the trail
- Over 50 % of respondents agree that footprints diminished their experience of the trail
- Over 50% of those identifying as skiers state that walkers and dogs on the trail are the reason they have stopped skiing at Chester Park
- The 2017/2018 Public User Survey also identified a need for, "Clear signage encouraging walkers/runners and dogs to stay to the far side of the trail"

Stated during 2018, new signage was installed, which was an improvement for what was previously within the park. Displayed the trail camera results, where the study period was December 2018 to April 2019. Stated the daily average use is 48 users per day (for all user types). Indicated dogs were a separate category, due to it being difficult to identify if a dog was with a walker or skier. Mentioned both uses are not able to coexist, based from stakeholder participation, the survey, and public input. Indicated decreased cross country use has occurred. Shared the staff recommendation is to accommodate all trail user types within the park by building a separate pedestrian trail that runs parallel. Displayed maps of the proposals. Shared action is being requested by the Parks and Recreation Commission during the September 11 meeting.

### Questions from the Parks and Recreation Commission

Isernhagen questioned how the trails will be monitored for proper use. Andrews mentioned cameras, hopeful support from the police department, and social enforcement from trail users.

Demmer indicated he was glad to see all uses are being viewed. Shared dog owners on the trails are mostly due to the hikers. Questioned what else can bolster the enforcement of the leash law. Andrews indicated that continued relationship with enforcement will need to occur.

Jessica Peterson indicated off leash dogs are an issue across the City. Stated we cannot focus on just one area for leash enforcement, but as a whole park system. Mentioned the park rangers are only funded during the summer season. Indicated the parks rangers work for the police department, not Parks and Recreation.

Demmer questioned why additional resources are not being put into enforcement for the parks. Peterson indicated this would be done if we had the resources. Demmer requested to provide further information of the damage and erosion that occurs along the trails.

Joyce questioned what the sample size was for the total number of users. Andrews indicated the



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of August 14, 2019  
Parks & Recreation Annual Meeting

City Hall – Council Chambers



information came from the counter and camera data, which was for the peak usage where the average was taken. Joyce questioned the duration of the survey. Andrews indicated that the survey occurred from December 27 to April 1. Joyce questioned if there are volunteers assigned to this project. Andrews mentioned the City of Duluth has a robust volunteer program, where there is not concern to find volunteers.

### Public Comment

Dan Proctor mentioned he had attended the June Public Meeting for the trail concerns. Indicated mountain biking was not allowed on any of the trails in the past. Shared he would like to see the mountain bike use allowed in the park. Indicated that he is the biggest offender for having dogs off-leash. Mentioned concerns had with having cameras. Stated he is currently working on the lower trail, and the ski club is working on coordinating trail construction, but it will not benefit the hiking group. Mentioned additional trails leads to mow mowing, stated it is a considerable expense for the City.

Barbra Possin mentioned she is a Master Naturalist and a member of the Red Team. Stated the shared trails worked, and encouraged the commission step back and look at all the changes similar to Spirit Mountain. Possin distributed a list of names of the people in support for the shared use of the trails. Requested to not destroy more vegetation. Mentioned the concern had with the two trails being too close together and eventually coming together. Stated there is not a lot of room to create more trails within Chester Park.

Thom Storm mentioned that he was the previous manager of Chester Park. Shared he would like to see the trails continue at shared use. Mentioned in the past he had tried signs, grooming everyday, and education, when it became clear to him that the reality is to make this a shared trail. Stated the shared trail concept is a peaceful place for skiers and walkers to coexist. Highlighted Chester Park is known for Peace In the Park, a safe haven for people to come and enjoy. Requested the City do everything they can to make Chester Park a safe place.

James Hoelter mentioned he lives along the ski trail, shared in the last two years he has not had friction with a skier. Mentioned that he is guilty with having his dog on the trail. Indicated he was a skier and runner, with age, it has caused him to slow down and he cannot walk on uneven trail. Mentioned there is concern with volunteers not creating a flat trail. Stated he walks the trail once per day. Mentioned there is not a hard answer on how to enforce the hiker ban of the trail.

Marsha Troy shared her concerns were addressed.

Unknown Public mentioned the observation had with mostly seeing college students using the trails and very little hikers. Indicated he would like this observation to be taken into consideration. Reflected on the conflict had due to the shared use, indicated he was not fast enough for skiers. Stated the park has been about keeping people happy.



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of August 14, 2019  
Parks & Recreation Annual Meeting

City Hall – Council Chambers



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### C. Campus Connector Trail Mini-Master Plan (Informational)– Jim Shoberg, Senior Parks Planner and Jennifer Moses, Planning Division, Senior Planner

Shoberg stated the planning was created in house within the City of Duluth in conjunction with the Metropolitan Interstate Council. Displayed the focus area being 4.25 miles in length from Rice Lake Road to the Lakewalk. Indicated this trail will go through the University of Minnesota, St. Scholastica, and the Bluestone apartments, as well as the Aspenwood neighborhoods. Shared the goal is to have a fully multi-use paved commuter trail for both bicyclists and pedestrians. Highlighted the importance on collaborating with stakeholders and the public with this planning process.

Jen Moses mentioned that she works for Planning Department for the City of Duluth for the last ten years. Shared in 2010 she was asked to work on a small area plan around the colleges in relation to housing and transportation. Reflected on the collaboration had with the schools, students, neighborhoods and at the end of the year the largest challenge was transportation, with many of the new developments being further away from the schools. Indicated a plan was developed and adopted by the City Council. Reflected on working with the MIC and Parks and Recreation to find out this idea was started back in 2006 with a corridor study along Rice Lake Road with the new housing developments. Indicated a trail was recommended during a study that was performed for UMD back in 2008. Reflected on the 2010 bicycle assessment, which was the same. In 2011 Trails and Bikeways plan recommended the first vertical connection between the hill and the lake. Displayed map showing the segments of the trail that have already been completed.

Shoberg reflected on the planning process for the Mini-Master Plan. Indicated Parks and Recreation will be seeking action during the September 11 meeting, MIC board will be in September, and City Council towards the end of September. Mentioned 441 individuals responded to the survey, where 86% use automobiles as their primary mode of transportation and 57% strongly support the idea of the Campus Connector Trail. The student surveys were distributed to UMD and St. Scholastica where St. Scholastica sent to the entire population, while UMD's method was more organic. Indicated Bristolwood Development had a meeting and well as a mailed survey, where we received 10 responses. Indicated the residents mentioned privacy was the most important factor. Stated a consultant was involved to discuss the technical challenges with the roadway and safety. Mentioned maintenance will be estimated at \$2000 per mile on the trail per year. Indicated there is currently not money to construct at this time, but we still need to get approval. Shared it can take up to 8 years to fully fundraise this project. Displayed the prioritization of the project. Displayed maps showing the alignments.

### Questions from the Parks and Recreation Commission

Demmer questioned how the segments will be prioritized. Shoberg mentioned this will be based on need, which includes highest density and safety concerns. Demmer questioned how the privacy concerns by the nearby residents would be addressed. Shoberg indicated he reached out to the nearby residents to inform of the potential design. Shoberg also mentioned vegetation and fencing can also aid. Joyce questioned what the term vertical connectivity means. Shoberg stated the term



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of August 14, 2019  
Parks & Recreation Annual Meeting

City Hall – Council Chambers



vertical connectivity means to get from the lake to the ridgeline. Joyce questioned if shopping or if the schools have been involved. Shoberg indicated it has already happened with the adjacent schools.

### Public Comment

Jeff Ubal mentioned he is a close resident of the Campus Connector Trail. Mentioned he had heard from neighbors that there is a security concern. Stated he would like the trails to stay as far away as possible. Thanked the Parks and Recreation Commission for their time.

Richard Haney reflected on the history of the Campus Connector Trail from the early 2000's. Referred to Fit City Duluth, a privately organization where they looked at health issues to improve, which had become the Healthy Duluth Coalition. Mentioned the focus of Fit City Duluth was to encourage the development of infrastructure, policy, and to help people achieve healthy active lifestyles. Indicated James Guidimier, along with a few others, began contacting the stakeholders including Aspenwood and the U of MN. Shared the goal was to create connectivity to provide access across the city for transportation. Shared he supports the trail.

Mckenzi mentioned she goes to Loll elementary and wants to bike safely to school and not get flat like a pancake.

Shawna Mullen thanked the City on addressing the safety concerns. Mentioned the trail will serve thousands within Duluth.

Mike Casey mentioned he is involved with bikes and pedestrians and is heavily involved with the Cross City Trail. Thanked Jim Shoberg and staff for the involvement within this project. Shared an individual was not a fan of the trail, but after having conversations, the individual now accepts the idea. Thanked the City for having the trail.

Alice Tibbits representing We Walk in Duluth, stated this organization started in October 2018 that focuses on walking 12 months of the year. Mentioned the City is looking into further clearing of the sidewalks. Indicated this is a commuter route, and proper maintenance will need to be performed. Mentioned the trail will increase property values. Shared there is not a statistic that indicates trails lead to increased crime. Highlighted this is public benefit on public land.

Tom Benson mentioned he is a nearby resident. Mentioned he has safety concerns for his family with potentially crossing Rice Lake Road. Stated there is an increased amount of accidents and garbage in the area. Mentioned he doesn't see how individuals can safely cross the trail at that point. Questioned the need for having segment 1 rather than taking the super sidewalk. Stated property values do not increase if there is a bicycle trail 100 feet from the house.

### V. Commissioner Committees





## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of August 14, 2019  
Parks & Recreation Annual Meeting

City Hall – Council Chambers



- A. Administrative (E-board) – meeting date: Thursday, August 22nd at noon at the Parks Office  
Chair – Amanda Crosby, Jill Joyce, Tjaard Breeuwer [Jessica Peterson, Alicia Watts, Lisa Luukkala, Jim Filby Williams]

### VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Joyce mentioned residents have been concerned about homeless camping. Questioned what will be done to the buckthorn piles throughout Lincoln Park.

### VII. New Business

### VIII. Old Business

- A. Western Waterfront Trail Extension – Route/Construction Alternatives (For Future Action) – Jim Filby Williams, Director of Public Administration and Lisa Luukkala, Assistant Manager

Stated the staff recommendation being a trail with rail. Indicated staff are confident to have a rail with trail, mentioned further details will be presented during the September 11 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting.

Luukkala stated more work with LHB has occurred on the further study for segment 1, as well as working with national rail and trail conservancy expert during the next month to develop a probable cost estimate for this segment. Indicated the original stakeholder committee will meet again to discuss final alignment pieces and have candid conversations with what we can achieve. Shared action will be requested by the Parks and Recreation Commission during the October 9 meeting, followed by City Council review during the end of October or beginning of November.

Demmer questioned how the financing became an option for segment 1. Luukkala shared there are national best practices with excursion, and now working with an expert to provide guidance. Demmer questioned if we would see the finalized alignment for segment 5. Luukkala indicated we will have the final alignment during the September 11 meeting. Demmer questioned if there would be any negative affect with the rail with how the current plan is moving forward. Luukkala indicated there could be some additional controls to accommodate both a rail to trail.

### Public Comment

Rich Staffon representing the Izaak Walton League, stated what the fish and wildlife utilize for the east in comparison to the west of the causeway. Indicated the causeway has provided protection to the vegetation. Indicated a small opening needs to happen in order to have some water flow. Questioned what would happen to the sediments if the causeway was removed. Indicated there are still too many questions to determine what would happen if the causeway is removed. Indicated he doesn't see the justification with the benefit for the volunteers with



## PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of August 14, 2019  
Parks & Recreation Annual Meeting

City Hall – Council Chambers



keeping the railway.

Bill Lynch indicated the lakefront trail goes away from the lake for several miles and is not along the water. Reflected the last presentation focused on the connectivity of neighborhoods. Stated the City doesn't want to connect to the Munger Trail, and he does not understand it.

Mike Casey chair for the Friends of West Duluth Parks and Trail, shared he appreciates the change and additional meetings to discuss a rail with trail. Thanked the press in the room, Izaak Walton League for pushing back on removing the train and keeping the trail. Indicated it has taken thousands of hours of his life by being involved with the project. Stated he looks forward to the next phase.

Joel Manns president of the LS&MR, shared an appreciation with the effort to make this a combination trail. Indicated many will be able to see the river that could not go through the whole trail. Stated the volunteers are telling the story of the railroad, Duluth, and Indigenous people. Indicated more value is going to be generated rather than saying there used to be a railroad here.

Juleene Boe thanked the staff, indicated it has been a long process. Stated the St. Louis River is a strong asset to the community. Indicated you don't need to bring outside experts because it is already existing. Questioned how the trail was named Western Waterfront, mentioned she would like to see the name changed to the St. Louis River Trail or Walk.

### **XIII. Division Report**

Peterson stated the quorum law and the two vacant seats being the Recreation Professional and the District 5 Seat. Stated we are still taking applications for the Recreation Professional and interviews are taking place.

#### **Public Comment**

Bill Lynch indicated the City Council passed three trails for off-leash dogs. Indicated it is in the paperwork and has never been implemented. Stated he doesn't understand why it was passed without providing implementation. Questioned why go through the process if nothing is going to take place.

#### **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 7:27 pm.

### **XIV. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 11, 2019 at the City Hall Council Chambers