



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Meeting of July 10, 2013



The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jon Welles at 5:05 PM at the Hartley Park Nature Center, 3001 Woodland Ave, Duluth, MN 55803.

Members Present: Jon Welles, Thomas Albright, Thomas Beery, Eric Viken, and Michael Schraepfer
Members with Excused Absence: Joel Braun, Erica Erickson, Edwin Hall, Susan Beasy Latto, and Andy Holak

Also Attending: Kathy Bergen, Parks and Recreation Division Manager; Judy Gibbs, Parks and Recreation Trails Coordinator; Tom O'Rourke, Director of Hartley Nature Center; Frank Jewell, County Commissioner.

Members of the Parks and Recreation Commission were welcomed to the Hartley Nature Center by Tom O'Rourke, Director of Hartley Nature Center. Mr O'Rourke provides a brief history of the Nature Center and an update on future improvement plans.

As there was no quorum, the minutes for the meeting of July 10, 2013 were tabled until the August 14, 2013 meeting.

PRESENTATIONS:

Duluth Traverse Update

Commissioner Viken, along with Kathy Bergen and Judy Gibbs, updated the Commission that a contractor has been hired and the contract grant is currently being routed for signatures. A pre-build meeting will be taking place for the project(s). The plan is to start building 3.5 new miles of trail at Lester and then move on to Mission. A completion date is unknown at this time.

There was discussion regarding the Duluth School Board potentially passing the development of a 20 ft easement/trail corridor on the southern edge of the Central High School property. Commissioner Beery suggested that Commissioners contact school board members to express their concerns/opinions and brought forth the idea of giving Central Hillsideers better access to the trail by eliminating the fence at Harbor Highlands. Discussion concerning land ownership, potential easements, and zoning followed

Mountain Bike Trail Re-routes

As of last Tuesday, reroutes for Lester Park are complete. Piedmont is scheduled to be completed next. Commissioner Viken commented that new trail signage is going up.

Hartley Park

Kathy Bergen and Judy Gibbs updated the Commission on the Mini-Master Plan process occurring for Hartley Park. Currently Parks and Recreation is working with consultants to create a Mini-Master Plan that recognizes Hartley as a "park of regional significance", thus making this park eligible for DNR Legacy Park Grants in the future. These consultants have expertise in many areas, including cross country ski trails, mountain bike and hiking trails, writing Legacy grants, DNR standards for parks and trails, forestry for Hartley's pine plantation and invasive species issues, and public input processes.

Tom O'Rourke commented that meetings have already taken place with City staff, Nature Center staff, stakeholders, Gary Larson (consultant for Cross Country Ski Trails), and representatives from COGGS (mountain biking organization). The next step is a public meeting with the date to be determined soon.

Cross Country Ski Trails

Judy Gibbs updated the Commission on the citywide cross country ski trail planning process. Parks and Recreation is currently working with Gary Larson, consultant, and are in the assessment/information gathering phase. Gary Larson is working with the Mini-Master Plan consultant at Chester to finalize the plan to replace the bridge damaged by the flood last year. This project is moving ahead and should be completed for the upcoming ski season. He has already held a meeting with stakeholders and ski coaches concerning ski trails at Chester.

Eric Shaffer is the City Engineer working on flood restoration projects at Lester. The project includes repairs to Seven Bridges Road and the ski trail, which requires moving both (and the lights on the trail) further away from the creek and slope issues. A public meeting is planned, but not yet scheduled.

Hartley Nature Play Area

Tom O'Rourke presented the new design for a safe outdoor learning space at Hartley Nature Center. They have obtained a Community Partnership grant and raised an additional \$15,000 to build 700 ft of new classroom space. Their overall goal for the new space is to create "self-directed play". Total cost is benchmarked at \$30,000 - \$60,000. Work on the landscaping component of the play area will hopefully be starting this fall with the major building and installation of structures planned for 2014.

COMMISSION COMMITTEES:

Recreation Programming – Youth and Adult

Kathy Bergen informed the Commission that although the Committee met, she has not received the minutes, grant requirements, and form updates yet. The anticipated timeline for awarding grants has passed, but the new goal is to receive applications this fall.

COMMISSIONER AND LIAISON REPORTS:

Commissioner Beery provided an update on the Park Point Small Area Plan and the community's response to the document approved by this Commission at their June meeting. The Park Point community is concerned about the details for each street ends and is waiting for Parks and Recreation to present a plan. Kathy Bergen responded that every street end on Park Point is unique and must be handled on an individual basis. Due to limited staff resources, these individual street plans will have to wait until the fall. Commissioner Beery included notes from another member of the Park Point Small Area Plan committee in his discussion to emphasize this importance. These notes are attached to these minutes.

Commissioner Beery reaffirmed the importance that the Parks Commission be represented at the Park Point Small Area Plan meetings to convey the importance of the 'Duluth vision'. With Commissioner Beery's resignation, effective with this meeting, another Commissioner needs to be appointed to this role.

County Commissioner Frank Jewell informed the Commission of a recent debate at the County Commission Board meeting regarding trail crossings in Duluth. A compromise resolution was approved; however, conversations between the County Board, the City, and COGGS on these issues need to continue.

Judy Gibbs commented that construction bids for a section of the Cross City Trail from Canal Park to 30th Ave W will soon be open, with plans to begin construction this summer.

NEW BUSINESS: No new business to report.

OLD BUSINESS:

Chairman Welles reiterated that chair people are still needed for the Trails and Bikeways and Recreation Programming committees. This will be addressed at next meeting when more Commissioners are present.

DIVISION MANAGER'S REPORT:

Kathy Bergen updated the Commission on the use of Segways on the Lakewalk. A Segway is not considered a motorized vehicle and can be on the Lakewalk and other paved bike paths according to state statues. Parks and Recreation has not received any complaints or concerns about Segways since the initial media attention.

Kathy Bergen undated the Commission on a plan to rezone park properties to a "P-1" status. This will provide a level of protection for our parks and green space areas via requirements outlined in the City's Unified Development Chapter (UDC).

The 2014 budget for Parks and Recreation will be completed by Friday, July 12, 2013. The City's general fund budget is very tight. The Park Fund budget is the same at 2013. Both budgets have to deal with higher costs for salaries, utilities, supplies, etc. The growing need to address regular maintenance and infrastructure is beginning to outweigh planning for future projects. For this reason, Parks is going to be more conservative with future spending and will not be proposing new plans. The Wheeler Mini-Master Plan is the only one Parks and Recreation will be doing in 2014 because it is already in motion with land acquisitions.

The July "Good News" was distributed.

Kathy Bergen informed the Commission that the annual Sandmodeling Contest and Beach Bash will be taking place Thursday, July 18, 2013. Additionally, 'Movies in the Park' starts Friday, July 11, 2013. The theme this year is super heroes.

PUBLIC COMMENT/SPEAKERS:

County Commissioner Frank Jewell brought forward a question/concern on how the City's Police Department gets their ATV onto the beach at Park Point. Commission Jewell informed this Commission that it appears the ATV went directly over the dunes. His concern is primarily focused on the protected beach grass and potential erosion caused by the tracks. Kathy Bergen stated that she will look into the matter.

ADJORNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 6:38 PM on motion of Commissioner Albright, second by Commissioner Beery, and a unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted by Amy Godsell, Parks and Recreation Project Technician
For Edwin K. Hall, Secretary (in his absence)