Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission

Meeting date: September 3, 2026 **Time**: 4:00 PM **Location:** Mississippi Gateway Regional Park

Members present:

- ☒ Chair, Tony Yarusso, at large
- ☒ Monica Dillenburg, District A
- ☒ Makiza Johnson, District B
- ☐ Tess Bouska, District C
- ☒ David Yakes, District D
- ☒ Chris Suerig, District E
- ☒ Lisa Freese, District F
- ☐ Anthony Taylor, District G
- ☐ Amanda Duerr, District H
- ☒ Wendy Wulff, Council Liaison

☒ = present

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Metropolitan Council acknowledges that the land we currently call Minnesota and specifically the seven-county region is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota Oyate who are present and active contributors to our thriving region. As part of the Metropolitan Council's commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism and the fact that government institutions, including the Metropolitan Council, benefitted economically, politically, and institutionally after the forceable removal of the Dakota Oyate, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to instilling Land, Water, and People Commitments in regional policy. These commitments support the Dakota Oyate, the eleven federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota, Ho-Chunk Nation, and the American Indian Communities representing over 150 diverse Tribal Nations that call the seven-county region home.

Call to order

Committee Chair Yarusso called the special meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:05pm.

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment was acknowledged by Chair Yarusso.

Agenda approved

Committee members did not have any further comments or changes to the agenda. Agenda approved.

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Yakes to approve the minutes of the June 30, 2026 special meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried**.

Public invitation

Cordelia Pierson spoke to oppose a potential housing development within the Central Mississippi Regional Park, part of the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board (MPRB) system. She expressed concern about a potential plan amendment that would convert parkland into housing. She wants to encourage MPOSC and the current Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to oppose this proposed development along the Mississippi River.

Here are the details: at 600 SE Main Street, a developer is proposing a re-zoning and comprehensive plan amendment for a small, triangular gateway site on the east bank of the Mississippi River at the Stone Arch Bridge, within the Central Mississippi Regional Park. The most prominent view for visitors crossing the bridge to the east bank of the Mississippi River is this small

parcel. Currently, it is listed as an in-holding and is eligible for acquisition by MPRB in its long-term plan for the regional park. It is the only private parcel on the east bank of the Mississippi River from the falls to the city limits that is in private ownership and is not institutional or industrial. In 2009, the city council denied the same developer's request.

Pierson stated she would like to raise awareness at MPOSC and the Metropolitan Council of this potential request. If the project ever reaches the agency level, she urges the Commission to oppose this request.

Business

1. 2026-141, Lake Rebecca Park Reserve Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Program, Three Rivers Park District (Shoberg) (Jessica Lee, 651-602-1621)

   Lee gave a presentation on a request from Three Rivers Park District for an acquisition of the Shoberg property for Lake Rebecca Park Reserve as outlined in the materials provided.

   Chair Yarusso asked why this request is a reimbursement. Lee noted that Three Rivers met their acquisition funding cap, and so they requested to delay this request until the new acquisition funds are available.

   Wulff noted that this funding is from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Program and it is not our bonding program which does not allow for reimbursement of projects already implemented.

   Johnson motioned and it was seconded by Suerig that the Metropolitan Council:
   1. Approve a grant of up to $376,650 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Three Rivers Park District to reimburse for the acquisition of a 1.27-acre parcel located at 8370 Rebecca Park Trail in Greenfield, MN, for the Lake Rebecca Park Reserve.
   2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

   With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote on the motion. **The motion carried.**

2. 2026-142, Lake Rebecca Park Reserve Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund Program, Three Rivers Park District (North Winds) (Jessica Lee, 651-602-1621)

   Lee gave a presentation on a request from Three Rivers Park District for an acquisition of the North Winds property for Lake Rebecca Park Reserve as outlined in the materials provided.

   Yakes motioned and it was seconded by Dillenburg that the Metropolitan Council:

   1. Approve a grant of up to $385,043 from the Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to Three Rivers Park District to acquire a 0.89-acre parcel located at 8495 Rebecca Park Trail in Greenfield, MN, for the Lake Rebecca Park Reserve.
   2. Authorize the Executive Director of Community Development to execute the grant agreement and restrictive covenant on behalf of the Council.

   With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote on the motion. **The motion carried.**

3. 2026-143, Regional Parks and Trails System Competitive Equity Grant Program: Notice of Funding Availability (Jessica Lee, 651-602-1621)

   Lee gave a presentation on the final Notice of Funding Availability for the Regional Parks and Trails System Competitive Equity Grant Program as outlined in the materials provided.

   Freese asked where the funding for this program came from. Lee responded that it comes from interest earnings on Council Bonds and Legacy money.

   Chair Yarusso confirmed this and gave additional history on where this money has come from and how it has been used in the past.

Dillenburg motioned and it was seconded by Yakes That the Metropolitan Council authorize the 2027 Regional Parks and Trails System Competitive Equity Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability attached to this report.

With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote on the motion. **The motion carried.**

4. 2026-134, Lake George Regional Park Long-Range Plan, Anoka County (Colin Kelly, 651-602-1361 and Ginger Hofmaster, Parks Intern)

   Kelly and Hofmaster gave a presentation on the Lake George Regional Park Long-Range Plan submitted by Anoka County as outlined in the materials provided.

   Yakes asked about a boundary adjustment proposed by the proposed plan amendment. Kelly stated it's a clean-up and correction of a mapping issue that originated in the early 1970's.

   Chair Yarusso asked if this land was intended to be within the park boundary. Karen Blaska, Anoka County Parks, reiterated that the map was done back in 1975 and today there are much better tools to create park boundaries and do accurate mapping.

   Dillenburg asked about the solar advisory comments. Chair Yarusso explained that Council staff conduct Council-wide review and often suggest considering solar but it's not a requirement. Kelly noted the advisory comment in the Business Item.

   Chair Yarusso asked about the Rum River Regional Trail location. Kelly passed out an updated image that proposes moving the trail.

   Suerig commented on the land removal and addition and asked why this was not done sooner. Blaska responded that when her team was doing the mapping of this new long-range plan, the error was discovered. This amendment will rectify the error.

   Dillenburg motioned and it was seconded by Suerig that the Metropolitan Council:

   1. Approve the Lake George Regional Park Long-Range Plan, including the addition of a 1.67-acre parcel and the removal of a 1.75-acre parcel, which corrects a boundary discrepancy from the original 1975 long-range plan identified in the Modernizing Mapping project.
   2. Approve the minor Rum River Regional Trail Long-Range Plan Amendment.
   3. Encourage Anoka County to implement Land Use and Solar Resources Advisory Comments.

   With no further discussion, Chair Yarusso called for a vote on the motion. **The motion carried.**

Information

None.

Reports

1. Chair – Chair Yarusso noted that the October MPOSC Agenda is light and asked members to reach out if they have suggestions.

2. Committee Members – Freese stated that she is getting more oriented on her district and meeting with Washington County on a quarterly basis. She noted that she has toured Lake Elmo Park Reserve and will tour Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park next.

   Johnson noted that he meets with Carver County on a regular basis as well.

3. Council Liaison – none.

4. Staff - Mullin stated that we may cancel the October Meeting – stay tuned. He noted that Washington County would like feedback on an upcoming Regional Trail plan they are working

on. He also noted that there is a plaque posted out next to the Coon Rapids Dam that thanks all the partners that help to make the Dam operation happen including the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and the Metropolitan Council. He suggested members may want to look at it.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

Boe Carlson, Superintendent, Three Rivers Park District gave a brief history of the Mississippi Gateway Regional Park and welcomed members to accompany him on a tour of the park at this time.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting of September 3, 2026.

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