

# Minutes

Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



**Meeting date:** February 5, 2026

**Time:** 4:00 PM

**Location:** 390 Robert Street North

## 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

Vacant, 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

With a quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:04 p.m.

## Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

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

## Agenda approved

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

## Approval of minutes

It was moved by Suerig, seconded by Chair Yarusso to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2025, meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

## Public invitation

None.

## Business item

**2026-29, Rice Creek North Regional Trail Long Range Plan, Anoka County** (Zoey Mauck, 651-602-1398)

Mauck gave a presentation on the Rice Cree North Regional Trail Long Range Plan from Anoka

County as outlined in the materials provided.

Chair Yarusso asked about dirt trails around the golf course, will they be paved? Karen Blaska, Anoka County Parks, stated that the trails will not. Only the connecting links will be paved.

It was moved by Dillenburg, seconded by Suerig, that the Metropolitan Council approve Anoka County's Rice Creek North Regional Trail Long-Range Plan.

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

### Information Item

**American Indian Place Names Series and Draft Toolkit** (Tracey Kinney and Allison Waukau, Metropolitan Council; Emma Pachuta and Carrie Day-Aspinwall, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board; Alice Messer, City of St. Paul)

Kinney and Waukau presented the American Indian Place Names Series and Draft Toolkit, current work, and workplan items including the Cultural Landscapes Classification. The group expressed support for dedicated places to allow for ceremonies. Also, there was interest in the topic of harvesting, including the need for public awareness.

The collaborative approach to this topic, including Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, City of Saint Paul, and the Metropolitan Council discussed the reasons behind this work and the importance of these discussions with the Indian elders, who are the history keepers. Additionally, there is planning for the Youth engagement session.

The team discussed barriers to progress as well as building trust. There has been positive engagement done with the American Indian community that has attracted full rooms of participants.

Wulff commented that these are wonderful learning opportunities. It strikes her that the tool kit is very useful. She suggested a map would be helpful showing the region, tribes, and include the settler names of natural features as well as the American Indian (Dakota) names of things.

Johnson stated that it was important to share present day history as well as the history that existed before settlement.

Dillenburg discussed her Mexican heritage, both her indigenous and colonial roots. Interpreting history of both cultures is important.

Wulff suggested translations with American Indian (e.g., Dakota and Ojibwe) words and discussed an online dictionary that pronounces words for you.

Chair Yarusso asked about the scope of Place Names team's work, including parks and trails. Kinney shared that the Parks and Trails Policy Plan uses one name for each unit. She expressed that this is important because of regional funding eligibility. Emma Pachuta, Minneapolis Park Board, shared that the first two place names engagements have been deeply impactful. Waukau stated that the Council can help be the convener of these conversations.

### **Bridging Facilities Workgroup Results and Proposed Language Changes for the Next Policy Plan Update** (Jessica Lee)

Lee gave a presentation on the Council-park implementing agency's Bridging Facilities Workshop results and proposed language changes for the next Policy Plan Update as outline in the materials provided. This was a very productive and relatively narrowly scoped recommendation.

Commissioners expressed support for this effort as he appreciates the Agencies coming to agreement on a shared recommendation.

### Reports

1. Chair – Chair Yarusso welcomed Makiza Johnson who is replacing Bob Moeller. He then thanked Commissioner Cecily Harris who recently resigned from District F.



2. Committee Members – Dillenburg noted that Three Rivers Park District is launching an online registration for permits.
3. Council Liaison – None.
4. Staff – Mullin welcomed Makiza and thanked Cecily for her service. He noted that her open position is posted on the Secretary of State’s website. He also discussed the Legislative season that is ramping up for the bonding year.

### **Adjournment**

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:52p.m.

### **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 February 5, 2026.

Approved this 5th day of March 2026.

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