

**Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting
Hartley Nature Center
3001 Woodland Ave, Duluth, MN 55803
Thursday, August 25, 2016
9:30 am – 2:30 pm**

M I N U T E S

Members Present:

Asha Shoffner, Bob Bierscheid, Brian Hubbard, Brook Maier, Jannik Anderson, Jenny Smith, Katherine Bloom, Kathleen Bergen, Les Ollila, Nancy Hanson, Patrick Stieg, Randy Sorenson, Renee Evans, Tom Stoa, Wayne Sames, Tim Mitchell, Peter Royer

Liaisons Present: Emmett Mullin, Renee Mattson, Phil Leversedge (for Erika Rivers), Laura Preus, Mike Hulett, Jan Youngquist

Guests: LuAnn Wilcox, Gratia Ratzloff, Raintry Salk, Tom Ryan, Tom O'Rourke

Staff: Paul Purman, Kelsey Depew

1. Welcome [handouts – August 25 agenda; June draft minutes]

Round-Room introductions.

Tom O'Rourke welcomed the committee to Hartley Nature Center. Talked about the center's preschool programs. About 1,000 kids came through the program during the summer. In 2014, they started the preschool, and the curriculum is based on self-directed play. They have received Legacy funds in the past from the DNR. They have used it on restoration, re-doing the parking lot, and creating interpretive signs. They are expanding programs and the campus space to bring more kids up to Hartley Nature Center.

Agenda approved.

June minutes approved.

2. Circle Back to DNR Presentation (from June meeting)

Paul reviewed the DNR Presentation in June, and what's happened since then. He commented that the presentation seemed well received by the group and generated discussion very useful to DNR in its planning. For instance, there seems to be good alignment between what the PTLAC identified as some key priorities (Connecting, Taking Care, youth, coordinating with partners) and the DNR Parks and Trails leadership team meetings to date. Erika, Laura and Paul met with the DNR P&T leadership team in July and shared what they heard at the June PTLAC, and that generated thoughtful discussion. Laura mentioned that the timing is working out well leading into planning for the new legislative session next spring. It is a time where we need the comments to share with the leadership team. Writing up and reporting about Legacy funding will need to be done in December for the legislative proposal.

Next Meeting – October 27, 2016

Committee Actions Required

Paul will work with governance, funding, and benchmarks subcommittees as identified in minutes.

All subcommittees should meet as needed.

Field Visit:

Tom O'Rourke of Hartley Nature Center, and Andrew Slade of Duluth Parks gave a tour of the nature center and park, including a stop at the yurt and other areas damaged in the recent storms. Group returned to nature center to participate/observe the 'Yurt Got Hurt' fundraiser for the public.

Benchmark committee – Bob B. noted that, as the committee discussed in a phone meeting after the April PTLAC, reporting back is extremely important. Tim M. also restated the importance of outcomes of Legacy spending.

3. Continuation of 2016 Legacy Assessment process – Met Council Presentation (Emmett/Jan, et al)

Emmett noted that the Met Council presentation would check in on how implementation of Legacy spending was going and how the Council and its implementing agencies are looking to move forward. The presentation is in four parts: background on metropolitan regional parks system, where we've been, where we're at, and where we're going. At different points, Jan, Raintry, and Gratia will be presenting. (See presentation slides handout.)

Slide comments (Emmett/Jan):

Background on Metropolitan Regional Park System

- 1974 Metropolitan Parks Act (state legislature)- The act is over 40 years old.
- Most recent policy document is the [2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan](#).
- They do not own or operate any park or trail, but work with ten implementing agencies.
- The metropolitan regional parks system had more visitors than the Mall of America in 2015!
- Park reserves are the larger parks in the system. Their focus is environmental conservation.
- Trails link the parks. They serve transportation or commuting needs. Many of them are old railroad corridors.
- Special recreation features offer something different for visitors. They normally include some sort of interest point, entertainment, or service learning. Example: Como Zoo and Conservatory in St. Paul.
- The policy plan includes regional park search areas with high quality natural resources that would work well with recreation services for future parks. The time frame for implementation is unknown.
- Regional trail search corridors are used for planning and consideration for acquisition and development of future trails. These can include active railroad lines, which are identified for trails if rail operations ever cease.
- Met Council provides funding for the regional parks system, including a Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Operations and Maintenance, Park Acquisition, and Legacy. Regarding Legacy grants, "each agency gets a piece of the pie" and the total distribution of Legacy dollars to each implementing agency is determined by a formula that is in state statute. 10% is set aside for land acquisition and is distributed first come, first served for eligible projects.
- Brian asked, "How do agencies prioritize their top projects?" - Each agency is required to have a master plan for the units in their system. The agencies then decide what their highest priorities are that meet the basic Met Council requirements. It is a lengthy process to get project approved before any Legacy funds are distributed. Legacy funds do not entirely cover a whole project, but is a match program.

Where We've Been—Historical Legacy Spending

- Video highlighting Acquire Land, Create Opportunities pillar spending (62%)
- Take Care of What We Have (33%)—trail reconstruction, natural resource restoration, replacing failing septic systems
- Connect People and the Outdoors (3%)—volunteer and education coordinators
- Coordinate Among Partners (1%)—support PTLAC, survey, website

Where We're At—Taking Stock

- Current disparity in regional park and trail visitors with communities of color
- Demographics are changing dramatically in the metro regional area—by 2040, 43% of the population will be people of color and 1 in 5 people will be 65 or older
- Equity Video on focus group research with traditionally underserved populations, comments from Raintry Salk.
- Lack of awareness is a key reason cited by underserved populations for not using regional parks and trails. Fear was also cited as a reason. Example of the gap in values between traditional parks users and underserved populations – many of the latter want to go to a park or trail with many people around (which for them can mean safety); whereas a traditional value of parks is to get away from people.
- Discussion around “Is the fear of unsafe parks from perception or firsthand experience (real, documented)?” – In an important sense, perception is reality, and we need to meet people where they are – but important to clarify what the nature of the perceived danger is to most effectively engage it.
- Moved into a short conversation about the role and value of Park Ambassadors to bridge the fear gap.
- Randy notes lack of data/information on populations with disabilities.

Where We're Going—Future Directions

- Met Council has adopted 13 Equity related policy concepts in the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan around planning and design, convening and information, and funding and investment.
- Highlights include requiring more robust community engagement in development of master plans, creating a Regional Parks Ambassador position, require a Regional Parks Equity Toolkit to be completed for Legacy and CIP applications, and create a Met Council funded competitive equity grant program.
- Met Council also will be requiring each implementing agency to spend a minimum percentage of Legacy funds on Connecting People and the Outdoors pillar.

Lunch

Lunch from GB Schneider & CO – Giant Focaccia Sandwiches, potato chips, noodle salad, & cookies.

4. Afternoon Met Council Presentation

- Connecting People to the Outdoors Session (Raintry/Gratia)

- Small Group discussion (PTLAC members only) – Answer the following questions and discuss within your small group: “What should the minimum percentage be that regional park implementing agencies spend on the pillar of ‘connecting people and the outdoors’? WHY?”
- The PTLAC members split into four groups, which reported out after their discussions.
 - 1st group – They did not choose a number. They noted that there were many variables they did not have data on (e.g., how much do effective best practices cost?), and wondered if they were the best people to answer the question.
 - 2nd Group – Min=5%, Max=17%, settled on 7%. They thought some counties still have to buy lots of land, so were reluctant to cookie cutter all into having to contribute so much to the ‘connecting people’ pillar.
 - 3rd group – Min=10%, Max=20%, 15% Median. ‘If you build it, they will not come’ (if they don’t know it exists!). But you also can’t effectively promote something that is not maintained well. They had more questions than answers during their discussion.
 - 4th group – They should not lock in a minimum number, but maybe start with 6 - 8%. Maybe a gradually increasing number over time? They also wondered if they were the right people to decide the number.
 - Individual comments –
 - People should share the success of what works and what’s cost-effective.
 - Recognize the tension between keeping facilities up (taking care) and connecting people to the outdoors – both are actually important to invite and retain users.
 - Several members were interested in measurements of programs and progress. How do we know if spending money on the connecting people to the outdoors actually works, what’s the objective data for programs like ‘I Can’? (DNR recognizes that this is important, but does not yet have good data on new user retention).
 - Some members noted that setting a minimum percentage to spend on ‘Connecting’ can seem arbitrary, but in fact is very important if the Met Council is serious about making this a regional priority. Otherwise the decisions about funding ‘Connecting’ will be made at the agency level and will probably not compete well with capital project demands.
 - Raintry notes that it matters that money is spent on promising opportunities, and their effectiveness evaluated. For instance, research suggests that an effective way to engage people in the outdoors long term is to provide them with a ‘ladder’ of experiences and skills that improve their comfort and competency over time.
 - Connecting people to the outdoors is different to different people. Some people want more family events and wider variety programs that involve kids and with

diverse cultural significance. Others want more education based programs. The point of setting the minimum % is not to proscribe what agencies must do or not do – but that they dedicate resources to the issue.

- The next steps in the Met Council 'Connect' initiative are to compile input from various stakeholders (PTLAC was last, but not least). They will determine a minimum percentage to recommend to Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and the Met Council. Whatever ends up being adopted will be applied to the FY 2018-19 Legacy budgets. Met Council staff will share the Council's decision at the next PTLAC meeting.
- Discussion/Questions Met Council presentation (Emmett/Jan, et al)
 - Q. How prominent is coordinating with other agencies around the geographic edges of the seven county metro within the Metropolitan Council? (Since, as a practical matter, the metro area includes the ring of counties outside its formal edge). A. There is collaboration especially on transportation (including trail) issues, since that connectivity is so important. It is politically very unlikely that the Met Council boundaries will ever formally be extended to incorporate any of the surrounding counties.
 - Q. With so much decision-making and implementation at the agency (not Council) level, it feels like there's a disconnect with what's happening on the ground, and what the Council can share with the PTLAC - what can the Council actually be held accountable for, and actually carry back from the LAC? (It's different for DNR, which is itself an implementing agency). A: There was a decision to create the funding formula so all the agencies under the Met Council will automatically get a piece of the pie - if it was left as a competitive grant based approach, some agencies could be left out of funding – the formula levels it out, depoliticizes it somewhat. (So GM's competitive process is different from the way the Met Council is set up to disburse funds). The regional relationship between Met Council and the implementing agencies will continue to be 'carrot and stick', with the 'Connecting People' discussion today an example of where the PTLAC gets a window, and some input, on the Met Council process.
 - Ambassador Program – comment that it is encouraging a position has been created and recently posted – would be great to have more than one position given the importance of reaching out to diverse communities, including youth, which are definitely underserved and a 25 Year Plan target market. Staff noted they have tried to carefully scope the ambassador positions, including managing expectations of what they can accomplish in a given timeframe. A lot of expectations tend to get piled on such positions, and the reality is the work is people intensive and results take time to materialize. Raintry notes that groups she would like to do research on in the future include the disabled, youth, and older adults (users and non-users).
 - Met Council has a different fund for conducting research. They do not use Legacy funds for collecting data.
 - Group discussed the three agencies' strategic directions presentations (April through today) and the ongoing work of the Benchmarks subcommittee to advise relative to the 25 Year Plan. Specifically, continue to look for the data that illustrates the connection between the Plan's pillars and benchmarks, and the projects and programs on the ground. Subcommittee advocates strengthening the requirements on reporting these

connections on funded projects – this can be delegated to those seeking to acquire Legacy funds for their projects. Staff acknowledged the need for continuing engagement on Benchmarks, and the value of strengthening and coordinating reporting. The best way to do this is through the [Legislative Coordinating Commission Legacy website](#), where Legacy results are posted for the public. Paul and others will continue to work to enhance the transparency and utility of the reporting, not only for the PTLAC, but the public at large.

5. Important Updates (as needed. Paul, agency liaisons, others)

- Status of UM Survey Work – still in progress.
- 40/40/20 Status going into 2017 Legislative Session
 - o Handed out letter with Brian’s signature to look over. The three agencies and the funding subcommittee agree that it will be beneficial to communicate the support of the PTLAC for continuing the 40/40/20 split through FY 2018-19, as originally envisioned by the Funding Committee (different than the funding subcommittee of PTLAC, with some overlap in membership). Group reviewed letter and suggested revisions, which Paul and Brian will work on. Recommended the letter be distributed after the elections.
- New GM Regional Park & Trail Designations
 - o Renee Mattson – Designated 14 new sites. 2 more sites were designated yesterday. Hartley Nature Center was one of them. They now have 43 designated sites.
- Brief Subcommittee Reports/Updates
 - o New communication plan will be sent out via email.
 - o Legacy information business card ‘tents’ will be printed soon for the PAT Legacy funds.
 - o Youth subcommittee met via phone to chat about outreaching efforts.
- New Member Recruitment Updates
 - o Brian and Asha attend “Board Repair” event – recruitment for people of color
 - o Paul and governance subcommittee will be bringing back more information for upcoming recruitment process – will be earlier than last year. <http://tcboardrepair.org/>
- Other
 - o Location for next meeting will be distributed soon.
 - o http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/17/travel/17hours.html?_r=0
 - o Fiwygin – Fit in Where You Get In – fiwyginoutdoors.org <http://www.ashamarie.com/>
 - o <http://www.rekinspire.com/>

6. Meeting Adjourned 2:30PM