

# **Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

MINUTES PROVIDE A RECORD OF MINNESOTA'S PARKS AND TRAILS LEGACY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS. THESE MINUTES BEEN APPROVED AND REVIEWED BY THE COMMITTEE ON July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.



## Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting

June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020

9:00 AM-11:00 AM

Metropolitan Council Host

WebEx

### Updates and Announcements

**Next Meeting:** July 23<sup>rd</sup> 9:00 AM-11:00 AM

**Meeting Host:** Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

**Meeting Location:** WebEx

### Action Items

- DNR staff will post the approved meeting minutes onto the PTLAC Website

## Minutes

**Members:** Andrea Christoffer, Cecily Harris, Heather Stirratt, Jason Hanson (absent), Jim Shoberg, Jon Oyanagi, Les Ollila, Louise Segreto, Margot Imdieke-Cross, Matthew Lindaman, May Yang, Pat Stieg, Pete Royer, Poppy Potter, Randy Sorensen, Sumbal Mahmud, Tim Mitchell.

**Liaisons:** Emmett Mullin, Renee Mattson, Tom Ryan (absent), Erika Rivers, Laura Preus

**Staff:** Gratia Joice & Margaret Krueger

### Introductions and Welcome

May Yang led the introductions and opened the meeting. A special thanks to everyone for their patience in using WebEx today.

**The February 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes were approved.**

### George Floyd's Death & Systemic Racism in Public Spaces

May Yang took the opportunity to acknowledge the recent events surrounding George Floyd's death in Minneapolis on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020. May reflected that she has been working hard the last several weeks to continue to educate herself on the issues of systemic racism in public spaces, especially in regards to outdoor parks & trails.

- Overall, it is statistically known that a disproportionately low percentage of people of color visit parks and trails facilities in Minnesota
- The 25-year Plan states that we must create a Welcoming Environment for parks & trails
  - Strategies for helping visitors have a Welcoming Environment:
    - Create programs, media, and educational materials
    - Recognize new and emerging cultures in Minnesota
    - Develop publications, signs, and other materials in multiple, accessible languages
    - Host cultural & ethnic celebration events, targeting first time visitors

May took this time to open the floor, and begin discussions on the current progress towards the above goals outlined in the 25-Year Plan.

Member comments:

- “Meeting people where they’re at” is incredibly important in reaching communities that are underserved by Parks and Trails systems
  - Bridging Facilities discussion on the agenda for later today represents a good example of this need
- Indigenous land acknowledgements are important for Parks & Trails, and are incredibly rare in MN
  - Focused in Northern MN (Lake Itasca)
  - More rare in Central & South East MN
- Restroom facilities must be more inclusive for all genders & non-binary visitors
- Conscious word choice regarding a “lack of outdoor experience” as a barrier to parks & trails visitation—this is not necessarily true for communities of color
  - Many marginalized communities simply are not comfortable with “our” (Minnesota’s) outdoor spaces, which does not necessarily reflect a general lack of experience in the outdoors
  - This relates directly to traditional harvesting practices, and more open (or lack of) regulations in foreign systems as it compares to Minnesota’s system of Parks and Trails, which does regulate certain harvesting practices
- “Outdoor Pedigree” is very much alive in Minnesota’s dominant culture in Parks and Trails, which leaves many groups excluded and unwelcomed
  - As outdoor recreation professionals- how do we bring new traditions into our parks and trails & ask ourselves: “What does it mean to be Minnesotan?”
- Continuing to build partnerships to address many of these issues is needed, and should be accomplished through the three implementing agencies
- How will the decrease in funding affect the implementing agencies’ systems that directly serve communities of color?
  - GMRPTC:
    - GMRPTC has 62 parks & trails facilities in the 80-county area outside MN’s metro
    - As a granting agency, GMRPTC has set aside a specific fund for grants that seek to Connect People to the Outdoors
    - Although this doesn’t directly speak to communities of color, this provides more incentive for parks and trails to continue outreach in Greater Minnesota
  - DNR
    - Minnesota State Parks and Trails has seen a 66% increase in visitation during Gov. Walz’s executive orders
    - During the pandemic & during times of grief in the wake of George Floyd’s death, people have turned towards spaces in nature to find solace & respite

- The State of MN is under a hiring freeze due to budgetary constraints
- Due to higher visitations, & hiring constraints, the Division of Parks & Trails currently has 230 staff vacancies
- DNR has been running through several scenarios & exercises to better understand the projected reductions in Legacy funding, and general funding needs
- The DNR has preserved all of the funding dedicated to Connecting People to the Outdoors
- One major side-effect of COVID-19 is that the I Can! Programs have been canceled, and are re-adjusting their approach to their program for 2020
- Conversations are continuing at the division leadership level to address equity in the outdoors, and the related budgetary needs in this area
- Despite a strong commitment to addressing systemic racism in outdoor spaces, the events around George Floyd's death prove that this is still a major issue in all systems

### Creation of Bridging Facilities, Special Recreation Features

Emmett Mullin began this discussion on the Metropolitan Council's recent work to develop equitable spaces within their implementing agencies' systems.

- The Metropolitan Council serves as an umbrella agency for 10 different parks and trails agencies in the metro region
- These implementing agencies are the ones actually responsible for the on-the-ground work within the Metro's parks systems

### Context of Bridging Facilities

- This year, the Metropolitan Council is making amendments to their Regional Parks Policy Plan to provide more equitable spaces in parks & trails, known as "Bridging Facilities"
- This idea emerged in 2015, which focuses on bridging facilities as special recreation features
- The establishment of the 25-Year Legacy Plan led to the development of 4 major pillars, or goals, one of them being Connecting People to the Outdoors
- This pillar focuses on the "non-capital" work in Parks and Trails, which was highly innovative at the time of its development
- This idea emerged when the Metropolitan Council created its Thrive 2040 Strategic Plan, which identifies the regional parks systems as the major component of the plan
- Bridging Facilities serve as an opportunity to introduce the regional parks system to new users
- Currently the 10 implementing agencies have concerns that this project would open the door to funding any possible local parks' facility needs
- This draft focuses on a community-wide effort from its staff

### Discussion: Suggestions & Questions on Bridging Facilities

- When this idea is moved forward, how will we bring in the voices from the communities in which these facilities will be developed?
  - Since 2015, the Metropolitan Council has been hosting focus groups with communities of color, outdoor recreation groups (including Latino Outdoors & Outdoor Afro), regular surveying and other major listening efforts
  - However, as this project continues to move forward, the Regional Parks Policy Plan has a public engagement requirement that can always be improved upon
- What will the specific implementation components off this project look like?
  - The operation component of these facilities requires a Council-approved master plan
  - Before any Legacy Funds would be available to the Bridging Facility, the agency will have to complete the master plan, and move it through the approval process in the Metropolitan Council, which includes the Metropolitan Council Open Space Commission
- The 10 Implementing Agencies will need to show a committed engagement to these facilities
  - Evaluating the success of these facilities is essential in meeting the main purpose of this project- introducing the surrounding regional parks system to new visitors
  - These facilities must retain a connection to the regional parks and trails, not the local parks & trails
  - However, partnering with local & regional agencies is necessary in maintaining this engagement
- Implementing a programming requirement is necessary before establishing a facility itself
  - “If you build it they will come” does not always prove to be true
- How will public transportation to these facilities be accessible to community members?
- How many of these facilities might eventually fit into the Metropolitan Council’s system?
  - At this time, the specific number of needed facilities has not yet been defined but will be a coordinated decision with the 10 implementing agencies

### Agency Updates: System Response to COVID-19

#### DNR

- As stated before, the DNR is still in the midst of hiring staff & working to get facilities re-opened
- Visitation has increased, and so revenue that normally comes in from visitation is still holding
- The DNR is working on the 2022/2023 budget in the wake of COVID-19, which involves re-prioritizing budgeting goals
  - PTLAC meetings serve as a good opportunity for consulting on the future priorities for the DNR’s 2022/2023 budget

#### Metropolitan Council

- All parks & trails systems have had severely significant impacts due to COVID-19

- Many staff are working remotely, with very minimal staff currently working in the field
- All parks & trails systems are seeing a major increase in visitation, which brings up concerns on how to maintain this level of visitation in a way that is sustainable
- Increase in maintenance & building grounds staffing has been the main response to this increased visitation

#### GMRPTC

- As stated, many people are finding solitude in MN's parks & trails, and all systems are seeing a major increase in visitations
- Greater MN is updating its strategic plan, which was last updated in 2015, and is expected to be finished by October, 2020.
- Loss in Legacy Funds has affected some granting applications for this year, but GMRPTC is planning on completing funding for the 9 recipients that are due in 2021

#### Funding Workgroup Updates

- The Funding Workgroup is a body of 9 individuals from each of the three implementing agencies, and was established to come up with a consensus recommendation on the funding split of Parks and Trails Legacy Funds between all three agencies
- Currently, the Legacy Funds are split between the three agencies as follows:
  - 40% goes to the Metropolitan Council
  - 40% to the MN DNR
  - And 20% to the GMRPTC
- The Funding Workgroup was tasked with coming up with a consensus recommendation by June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020
  - Due to COVID-19, some in-person meetings were canceled, and the group has agreed to continue discussions until August 15<sup>th</sup>
- The Funding Workgroup has continued its meetings remotely, and are still in active negotiations
- The Funding Workgroup has been working with a third-party, the Mediation Center, to complete this process and complete a consensus recommendation by August 15<sup>th</sup>
- The Mediation Center continues to update their website & more information can be found at: <https://mediationcentermn.org/27824-2/>

#### Final Updates

##### Next Meeting Details:

**Next Meeting:** July 23<sup>rd</sup> 9:00 AM-11:00 AM

**Meeting Host:** Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

**Meeting Location:** WebEx

##### Alternate Chair

The alternate chair for the PTLAC was not selected at today's meeting. This action was postponed due to not having an in-person meeting today. This action will take place within the

foreseeable future, and DNR staff will provide updates on this before the July 23<sup>rd</sup> PTLAC meeting.

**The meeting was adjourned.**