

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission

March 13, 2024

David Demmer, President of the Commission, called the meeting to order. There followed two informational presentations: (1) The Duluth Area Pickleball Association [DAPA], by its president, Jessica Thiel; and (2) a review of the historical background and present state of planning and renovation for Norton Park led by Cliff Knettel, Assistant Manager, Department of Parks.

Pickle Ball was invented as a sport in 1965 near Seattle, Washington, and presently has 36.5 million participants in the United States, making it the fastest growing sports community in America. Pickle Ball, a very social sport played by people of all ages, is a combination of tennis, badminton, and ping pong. The DAPA [<https://www.duluthpickleball.org>] was founded in 2016, and holds prep clinics around the area as well as hosting local tournaments. The organization also works to protect and repair outdoor surfaces for play and is engaged in finding more indoor spaces to play as well.

In 2016, Norton Park became a city park as part of the St. Louis River Corridor Initiative and the resulting Neighborhood Parks Plan. A master plan for the development of Norton Park was approved by the Council. The current layout includes a playground, sports court, a baseball field, and an open green space. There is a small building on site, but this structure has been permanently closed and is awaiting removal. Key parts of the 2016 plan remain works-in-progress. Among these are additional work on drainage, storm water management, stream restoration, and efforts at invasive species control. Also on-going is the removal of the lighting fixtures of the former sports field. At the next meeting of the Commission [10 April at the Harrison Com. Ctr.] the Parks Department will seek to engage community members in a discussion of priorities. This process will ultimately lead to making a request for funding to the city and neighborhood in order to set the stage for applying to the MN DNR Outdoor Recreation Grant Program for substantial assistance. The plan is to submit an application to the DNR in April of 2025. Work on Norton Park will begin later in 2024 and run through 2026, with the remainder of 2024 used to further community engagement and to release an RFP in order to obtain detailed cost estimates needed for further grant applications. Implementation of the resulting plan is set for the summer of 2026.

In conclusion, this observation team also wishes to join in welcoming the many new members of the Commission: a young, diverse and excitedly engaged cast of our fellow citizens.

Respectfully submitted by Tom Burns, Lane Palmer, and Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission

February 14, 2025

The meeting agenda consisted of three informational presentations, and no formal actions by the Commission were required.

The first presentation was on the activities of the Duluth Friends of Tennis, the not-for-profit organization who administer the city's Longview courts at East 4th Street and 25th Avenue East. Friends of Tennis provides coaches for youth and adult lessons; they also staff the 100-year-old clubhouse. Duluth East high school uses the courts for practices. As a city-owned facility, the courts are open to the public, and at least one court is kept available for non-scheduled use. Two-week lessons are provided at a reasonable cost, and there is a 7-week tennis camp for youth that had 82 participants in 2013. Two pickleball courts plus equipment are available, and the demand has steadily increased for this. The partnership between Duluth Parks and Recreation and Friends of Tennis seems to promote quality court surfaces, structured opportunities to learn the game, and attention to overall facility needs and upkeep.

The second presentation was on the capital budget for Parks and Recreation. The capital budget for 2024 is about \$33 million, and mainly covers costs of major repairs/maintenance, new construction, and acquisition of land and facilities. The majority of funds come from state and federal grants, fundraising and private donations. Roughly two-thirds of the budget is for park facilities, and one third is for trails. The largest single expenditure, about \$7.4 million, is for the planned renovation of Enger Park Golf Course. Other significant projects include renovation of facilities at Kitchi Gammi Park and repairs at Wade Stadium. An interesting and cautionary presentation was made on the extra cost of deferred park maintenance over time. Duluth keeps track of current and expected capital needs over time using a line graph, which illustrates the difference between current and future rates of expenditures. Unfortunately, what is called the "Line of Doom" forecast for Duluth is not good unless the city increases funding for current and future facility needs.

The final presentation was on the Spirit Valley Community Center, a proposed 36,000 square foot project to be located at Memorial Park, adjacent to the intersection of Grand and Central Avenues. The Center would help to replace a number of community centers in the area that have closed in recent years. It would have indoor sport courts, a fitness studio, and a walking track, in addition to space for parks and recreation programming. The estimated cost of the project is \$31.8 million, with \$15 million in bonds, \$8.0 million in Federal funds, \$5.4 million from the City, and \$3.4 million from fundraising. The proposed timeline is design completion in 2025, construction in 2026, and opening in 2027.

Detailed slides for the three informational presentations, including the Line of Doom, are available [here](#).

Submitted by Lane Palmer, Tom Burns, and Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting December 13, 2023

The meeting of the Commission was held at the Evergreen Community Center in West Duluth, and it had a relatively slim agenda, but interesting discussions. The only item that was truly new was an informational presentation by members of the Duluth Foot Trails Alliance led by Jesse Schomberg, its president.

The Alliance has been in existence since 2021, but only received its 501c3 designation in October of 2023. The central goal of the Alliance is to provide a focus to the many individuals and groups that walk the Duluth area's natural surface foot trails. Together with other groups, members are keen on working across the entire spectrum of users to assure that the foot trails are sustainably maintained, accessible, and continue to provide enjoyment to our diverse trail community. The Alliance's self-declared mission is three-fold: (1) Advocacy for those foot trail users not represented by other organizations and to interface with established groups with similar interests; (2) Action to identify and overcome barriers to the use of foot trails by all, and to recruit members of the community to participate in sustainable trail development; (3) Education and Outreach, focusing on sustainable use and trail etiquette. The group also plans to reach out to potential users of Duluth's foot trails who so far have been reluctant to get on the trails. In its relatively short history, the Alliance has already played a coordinating role among user groups. In conclusion, members of the Alliance stressed the need for all trail users -- of both natural and paved surfaces -- to practice good trail etiquette.

Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/dufta/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DUFTA/>

There followed various business matters concerning next year's agenda and meeting dates.

The last business item concerned the problems associated with developing a common procedure for naming, co-naming, or renaming a Duluth City Park, trail or park asset. Discussion of the issues involved and general approaches to the problem was led by Jessica Peterson, Parks Manager. Peterson suggested the need to create a naming taskforce and for everyone to retain as much flexibility as possible.

Finally, Commission members gave a hearty round of applause to recognize the dedication and leadership of Amanda Crosby, the out-going president of the Commission.

The next meeting of the Commission will be 14 February at 5:00 at the Harrison Community Center.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tom Burns
Lane Palmer
Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting September 13, 2023

Presentations included the Northern Expressions Arts Collective (Informational) by Patrick Weber, Director, Parks Programming Recap (Informational) by Parks Recreation Specialists, and the Athletic Venue Reinvestment Initiative (Informational) Jim Filby Williams, Director of Property, Parks, and Libraries. The detailed presentations can be found at <https://duluthmn.gov/media/websubscriptions/94/20230914-94-15645.pdf>

The Northern Expressions Arts Collective has the goal of “Strengthening Families Through Artistic Play.” Recent events included Creativity in the Kitchen, Play Time, Lake Superior Seedlings, Imagination Station, Egg-spllosion, Haunted Happenings, and The Vanishing Mushroom Forest. Upcoming events and further information about the collective can be found at their web site <https://www.northexp.org/>.

Parks Programming included many, many activities as described by five recreation specialists. Youth programs included biking, ice skating, soccer, fishing, flag football, archery, and pop-up splash pads. Adult programs included ultimate Frisbee, snowshoe kickball, volleyball, pickleball, and disk golf. Contacts for parks programming are Adam Fornear (Adults and General Programming), Claire Hoffman (Senior Programming), Jarod Meyer (Athletics Programming), Megan Lidd (Community Events Programming) and Sam Werle (Youth and Family Programming) with contact information in the presentations link above.

The Athletic Venue Reinvestment Initiative plans uses of funds linked to the city’s lodging and food taxes which must be spent on projects to support tourism. Most sports tourism takes place at Wade Field, Wheeler Fields, Jean Duluth Baseball & Soccer Fields, Fryberger Arena, and the Arlington Sports Complex. Enger Park Golf Course (when renewed), Spirit Mountain Nordic Center (when complete), the Gary-New Duluth Skate Park (when complete), and other locations are potential future tourism venues. More details on these phases can be found in the presentations link above. Phase I Time-sensitive Projects in Progress 2023 – 2024 (\$4.8 M). Phase II Primary Outdoor Sports Venues 2025 – 2027 (\$14.2 M). Phase III Indoor Sports Venues 2027 – 2029 (\$32 M). Phase IV Outdoor Sports Venues 2030 – 2033 (\$9 M).

Respectfully Submitted,

Tom Burns
Lane Palmer
Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting August 9, 2023

Tom O'Rourke, Director of Hartley Nature Center, gave an Informational presentation. The overall goal of the nature center is to foster a lifelong connection with nature, focusing on children from kindergarten through primary school ages. Field trips to Hartley are very popular among Duluth area schools. There is also a busy summer camp program for ages 3 to 12. In recent years an innovative pre-school was created which focuses on nature and outdoor experiences. A new 5,000 square foot expansion of the nature Center has enabled the pre-school to expand from 90 to 120 students.

The nature center has an operating budget of \$1 million and is staffed by 11 full-time and 12 part-time positions. All the grounds, building and other improvements are owned by the City of Duluth (as part of Hartley Park), which has given a long-term lease to the nature center. The nature center is a key player among a variety of trail user groups such as the Superior Hiking Trail Association, Duluth Cross-Country Ski Club, and Cyclists of Gitchee Gumees Shores, as well as park stewardship efforts to preserve and enhance natural areas. The Commissioners' response to Tom O'Rourke's presentation was very positive, with many citing fond personal and family experiences with Hartley Nature Center.

Parks and Recreation Staff also requested approval of a plan for the Hillside Sport Court Park. This plan would make a number of improvements to the small park, located in the central hillside neighborhood, including new and improved playground equipment, a community garden, a pavilion and picnic area, and open greenspace. A draft of this plan was presented at the May Commission meeting, followed by a public comment period in June and subsequent plan revisions by Parks and Recreation staff. The Commission approved the final plan by unanimous vote, and it was sent to the City Council for their approval. The location of the park is bounded by East 7th and East 8th Streets, and North 4th and North 5th Avenues East. Details of the final plan and public input may be viewed at:

<https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/hillside-sport-court/>

Lane Palmer
Ron Regal
Tom Burns

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting May 10, 2023

The first of three presentations made was by Doug Stevens from the Friends of the Incline Steps, a group seeking to preserve the remnant steps along the route of the historic Duluth Incline Railway. This cable-operated railway was in operation from 1891 to 1939 and provided access to newly developing areas of the city. The two railway cars could hold wagons and up to 250 standees each as they climbed or descended over 500 vertical feet.

Recently designated a recreational hiking trail, the steps are parallel to North Avenue West as it climbs from West First Street up to West Ninth Street. The Friends group is currently raising funds to provide interpretive signage to educate people about the historic site, as well as to give directions. Duluth Preservation Alliance and the ECO Rotary Club have teamed up for fundraising, and Bent Paddle Brewing is doing a Round Up fundraiser through the end of May.

The second presentation, by Matt Andrews, city trails coordinator, focused on trail upkeep and improvements for Duluth's vast trail systems during 2021-2022. This covered several dozen individual projects, which included improved trail drainage and design, some rerouting of trails, new or repaired bridges, and new interpretive and directional signage. Major work was done on improvements to the Duluth Winnipeg and Pacific (DWP) Trail on the far west side of town, and a substantially-changed Brighton Beach Park on the east.

Duluth's trail systems provide for a variety of active outdoor experiences, including hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, canoeing/kayaking and snowmobiling. Eight projects were on paved or graveled trails. These key trails are open year-round, while the majority of trails are on natural surfaces and subject to closure during fall freeze-up and the spring thaw.

Much of the funding for trail improvement as well as volunteer labor comes from outside sources, such as state, federal and local grants, donations from civic organizations and individuals, as well as organizations such as the Superior Hiking Trail Association, Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shore, Duluth Cross Country Ski Club, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, and the Chester Bowl Improvement Club.

The third presenter was Parks staffer Katie Bennett, who discussed improvement planning currently underway for the Hillside Sport Court Park. This park is located next to the intersection of North 4th Avenue East and East 7th Street. The product will be a "mini-master" plan to guide the future development of Hillside Park.

Facilities currently within the park are a playground and sports court. However, the majority of the park is currently undeveloped and designated as "open green space". The plan will consider current and future needs for the playground and sport court, for example determining if the facilities are in need of repair or replacement. Also, consideration will be given to possible uses of the undeveloped land. One proposal already put forth is a community garden.

A community input session was recently held at the Central Hillside Community Center. Based

on this input, Parks staff will present a draft plan to the Parks and Recreation Commission at their June 14 meeting, which will then be followed by a 2-week public comment period.

Final approval of the plan would be requested from the Parks and Recreation Commission on August 9, and adoption by City Council on August 21. Construction documents would then be prepared, equipment ordered and bid in time for the project to be completed in 2024.

Submitted by
Lane Palmer
Tom Burns
Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission

Meeting April 19, 2023

Amanda Crosby, president, called the Annual Meeting to order. There were no items on the agenda that required commission action, that is a formal vote. There were, however, two important informational presentations, the recognition of Mary Tennis for volunteer service, and the handing out of the Annual Report for 2022 [<https://duluthmn.gov/media/14982/2022-annual-report-final.pdf>].

Presentations:

(1) Gerry Sjerven reported on the status and activities of the Duluth Girls Fastpitch League [<https://www.duluthgirlsfastpitch.org/>]. The league was founded in 2010 and has now grown to 150 girls even during the pandemic. The season is short (one week before Memorial Day to mid- July) since the playing fields must dry out before practice and play can commence. Supporters have helped install better drainage and field preparations. The League is part of the Arrowhead Fastpitch League with teams being formed in late March and early April of each year. All team members will be able to play in every game, and each team will have the opportunity to play in weekend tournaments. Games are played at Piedmont Field.

(2) Sam Geer of Urban Ecosystems and Cliff Knettel, Senior Parks Planner, presented a report on the marvelous and developing hopes and plans for the Lakewalk: The Lakewalk Interpretive Plan. The goal of the plan is to make the Lakewalk a welcoming place for all people, and a place to host cultural events with a focus upon Duluth and its history and to point to other cultural and natural areas in the city. The plan proposes more Wayfinder Signage, already present in limited numbers along the Lakewalk, orienting patrons as to where they are, what they are seeing, and where there might wish to go nearby to see more of our cultural and natural heritage. Planned topics include: the ecology, geology and history of the St. Louis Estuary, sacred landscapes to Native Americans such as Chief Buffalo's Quarter, Maritime shipping history and shipwrecks, commemorate minority contributions to Duluth, a part of the Equal Justice Initiative, Figtgers and Brewing history, our Nordic traditions, historic relics such as the pump house remains, and, of course, the central role played by Lake Superior and the St. Louis Estuary in our city. This project has only just begun and will depend upon funding and the evolution of local interests and ideas on how to WALK through Duluth's multidimensional past and present. This is a report that everyone should want to read. The two-week Public Comment period begins on 24 April. [<https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/lakewalk-interpretive-plan/>] and also the Lakewalk Resiliency Design [<https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/lakewalk-resiliency-project/>].

(3) Mary Tennis, the decades-long lead-gardener for Duluth's award-winning Rose Garden, was recognized for her continuing service to our community in her retirement.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tom Burns, Lane Palmer, Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting March 8, 2023

Two excellent presentations were given at the meeting. The first one was an update on programs run or facilitated by Duluth Parks and Recreation for senior citizens (age 55+). These include Activity Clubs, covering a variety of indoor games, crafts, and exercise activities taking place at park facilities, General Senior Programs led by Parks and Recreation staff, and Special Events, such as the All City Senior Picnic and the Annual Holiday Party. Many of these programs were curtailed or eliminated by COVID and have only recently recovered or been brought back. The report also provides data on program participation numbers, program partnerships, such as with AARP and Meals on Wheels, and program interests reported by seniors.

The second presentation, Strategic Public Lands Re-alignment, gave information about plans for 2000 acres of County tax-forfeited land that the City of Duluth has recently acquired. These lands will be dedicated as new City park land, protected natural areas, or lands that enhance stormwater and flood resilience. The lands are located at or in general proximity to Lester/Amity Park, Hartley Park, Piedmont, Mission Creek (near Fond du Lac), and at several locations along the St. Louis River estuary. Formal completion of all land transfers will occur by the end of 2023, and the City will have until 2026 to designate specific parks lands and protected natural areas

Respectfully Submitted,
Tom Burns, Lane Palmer, Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting February 8, 2023

The election of a commissioner to the Administrative E-Board was the only matter of business voted upon. Commission President, Amanda Crosby was elected by the members.

Next the Commissioners voted to Table a motion to approve the minutes of the January meeting in order to provide more time for the staff to complete a review of the draft document brought about by the failure of the electronic recording system at that meeting. Commissioners Demmer and Pederson were particularly concerned that the minutes more accurately reflect their actions concerning the discontinuation of the Duluth Public Golf Committee, as they recall them. Jessica Peterson, Director of Parks, agreed to head up that review and report back at the next public meeting of the commission.

Three excellent informational presentations followed:

(1) Dave Pagel and Nick Fleming presented a report on the work of the Duluth Climbers Association at Quarry Park, the only Ice-Climbing venue in the area. After much work from members of the association, led by the presenters, at the former site of the Duluth Crushed Stone Company, the ice climbing / ice farming venue has opened. A unique feature of the new facility is that the ice depth and quality can be monitored and adjusted remotely. Various zones in the ice cliff have been designed to support the range of technical skills among the climbers themselves. This is a unique and marvelous addition to the parks system of Duluth.

(2) Chris Severson, the Parks Permit Coordinator, provided an overview recapping Permitting and Reservations in 2022. The usage rates in 2022 were very impressive to say the least as many thousands of people used our facilities after obtaining permits for: (1) Private events (288), (2) Wedding events (100), and Special events (138). Permits were also issued for Alcohol Consumption (93), Busking [sidewalk music] (33), Commercial Operators (31), After Hours (4), and Film/Photo (4). Community Center Rentals continued to be very much in demand. Severson also noted that there would be challenges ahead in 2023, specifically adjusting for continuing Lakewalk Construction, the closures of Brighton Beach and parts of the Cross City Trail, and the Erie Ponds restoration projects.

(3) Cliff Knettel, Senior Parks Planner, provided an update on the Lakewalk Interpretive Plan, focusing on the sections from Endion Station to 21st Avenue East, but also noting the Harbor Plaza and the Lakewalk Resiliency Plan for that area. Knettel reported that the city is using the same consultancy as with other recent projects and is consulting local stakeholders. He especially praised the support and cooperation of the Friends of the Lakewalk. For further information see:
The Lakewalk Interpretive Plan

<https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/lakewalk-interpretive-plan/>
AND Lakewalk Resiliency Design

<https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/lakewalk-resiliency-project>
AND Harbor Plaza Design

<https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/harbor-plazabaywalkseawall/>

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00P.

Respectfully Submitted, Tom Burns, Lane Palmer, Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting January 11, 2023

The meeting started with an informational presentation by Dave Schaeffer, Executive Director of the Chester Bowl Improvement Club on current and planned activities at Chester Park. The non-profit Club was founded in 1982 and operates or facilitates a learn-to-ski program (alpine), a summer youth camp, Chester Park Fall Fest, and summer outdoor music events. Their major facilities include a chalet for year-round use and a chair lift (and grooming equipment) for the ski program. For skiing they typically have issued 1900 season passes and 1200 season ski rentals per year, and for their summer camp they have about 90 campers per day over a ten-week period. Financial assistance is offered for skiing and summer camp. The Chester Park Fall Fest includes informational booths, activities, and vendors and usually has 7500-10,000 attendees each year

The Chester Bowl Improvement Club has started a program to make needed improvements to facilities and to provide for growth in programs. They have already built a new bridge across Chester Creek which provides access to trails and the ski hill. The next phase is focused on a new chalet. Fundamentally, the current building is too small and has deficiencies in heating, accessibility and other areas. The Club will kick off public campaign in Spring for \$750,000, to match anticipated \$1.5 million in grants.

Websites for the Chester Bowl Improvement Club and their improvements campaign:

www.chesterbowl.org

<https://growingupchester.com/>

The second half of the meeting concerned the Public Golf Committee. Parks Manager Jessica Peterson requested that the Committee be discontinued. After a lengthy discussion about the past and current relevance and possible alternatives to a formal committee, the Commission voted 7-2 to discontinue the Public Golf Committee.

Submitted by:

Lane Palmer

Tom Burns

Ron Regal

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting of October 12, 2022

The Commission meeting was entirely devoted to presentations and discussions of two on-going business items: (1) an Update of the Park Referendum presented by mayor Emily Larson and Jessica Peterson, Director of Parks; and (2) Options for Duluth Golf Operations during Enger Golf Renovations by Peterson. The Parks Referendum is on the ballot in November because the it calls for a basic change in the structure of the annual Parks Levy, and tax levies must be approved by a vote of the citizenry.

Agenda item #1: A New Park Levy.

Larson and Peterson presented the reasons why a basic reform of the Parks Levy was needed. The current Levy, which has now been in effect unchanged since 2012, is legislated to collect a fixed amount of \$2.6 million per year with no possibility of adjustment for inflation or new directions in Parks planning and maintenance. The Parks Levy is the only dedicated source of City funding for Parks capital spending. This sum is then used directly and indirectly to leverage additional funds by way of grants and donations. Why is a new Levy necessary? Succinctly, only 9% of Duluth's parks are in "Good Condition," and in various surveys 9 out 10 citizens of Duluth placed "Fix Neighborhood Parks" as their highest priority for Duluth Parks. Admittedly, there are other sources of funding such as the City's General Fund and the Tourist Tax, and, although both sources are regularly deployed, neither is legally bound to do so. Peterson addressed the disparities between specific maintenance costs in 2012 dollars and the same expenses in 2022. Every year the gap has widened and has had to be made up from other sources, except that it was not. The result is the poor state of parks maintenance, especially in our neighborhood parks. Mayor Larson also made clear that the old fixed-system, still current, does not reflect new investments in neighborhoods since 2012, nor changes in the housing patterns and population densities throughout the city as well as would one based on property value assessments that change over time. Therefore, Larson sees the Levy vote in November as a chance for the community to reestablish its fair share of Parks funding. The City clearly favors the change being proposed, and the Commissioners universally supported that approach.

The City will host two more Park Fund Referendum informational sessions. These sessions will include a brief presentation from Mayor Emily Larson, Director of Property, Parks, and Libraries, Jim Filby Williams, and will have other City staff on hand to answer questions. The presentations will highlight key information regarding Parks funding, the question that will be before voters on November 8, and provide an opportunity for residents to ask questions, provide feedback, and learn more.

The dates, times, and locations of the two remaining informational sessions are:

- Wednesday, October 19, 2022 from 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm at Harrison Community Center
- Friday, October 28, 2022 from 8:30 am – 10:00 am at Portman Community Center

Agenda Item #2: Options for Duluth Golf during the Enger Renovations.

Once again, Duluth Public Golf demanded City attention. The Council voted previously to approve the reopening of the Lester Park Golf Course for two years while the Enger course is closed and undergoing much needed remodeling with basic repairs or replacements such as a new irrigation system with a network of ponds that can share water reserves during normal dry seasons and accept purchased water in extreme droughts, as well as the restoration of Buckingham Creek to its original course. Work at Enger will include new greens and fairways, and a repaired club house, where the roof has been leaking with resulting damages. When completed, Enger Park Golf Course will be a very much enhanced 27 - hole golf course, which the City hopes will attract our own resident golfers to return and others to come and enjoy public golf in Duluth. "The Ringer" is that the projected cost of reopening 18 holes at Lester for two years [originally for 2021 and 2022, but presently that operational closure has been extended into 2023] before then permanently and completely closing the course, has increased very significantly. Money spent at Lester is money that cannot be used at Enger for permanent renovations. The new option being discussed would keep at least nine holes open at Enger while renovations there are on-going, and not reopening Lester but rather completely and permanently closing it. Thereby funds would be available in the amount saved to enhance the renovations slated for Enger. Regardless of the option pursued, the completion schedule for Enger to be fully operational will slide to 2025 from the current projection of 2024. The overall timeline for action is tight. An operating agreement with Indigo Golf will go to City Council [October/November, 2022]. RFPs for construction bids will be posted in October. The City Council annual golf budget presentation is scheduled for December 5, 2022. Commissioners spoke at length about their concerns that reopening these questions after a previous agreement by the Council to temporarily reopen Lester would further offend Duluth's golfing community. All involved in these discussions, however, clearly understand that no solution will please everybody. Discussions continue.

Sincerely submitted,

Tom Burns
Lane Palmer
Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting August 10, 2022

The meeting focused on two highly related items, the completion of a draft new master plan for parks and recreation, and a proposal to seek more funding through an increase in the parks and recreation tax levy.

Mayor Larson spoke first about the tax levy. The proposal would increase the parks and recreation budget from \$2.6 million to \$4.2 million, providing funds to better maintain and improve existing facilities and programs, as well as for key future initiatives presented in the new master plan. Commissioner support and comment included a strong interest in applying the funds equitably across the city, and in mobilizing support among interest groups such as the Minnesota Land Trust. Mayor Larson expected to present a request to the City Council on Monday, August 15, to have the levy referendum placed on the November ballot.

The next item was a review of a draft of “Essential Spaces”, a new master plan for Parks and Recreation. If adopted, this plan will replace the current master plan from 2010, providing guidance on the city’s system of parks, recreation, open space, and trails for the next decade. The plan was guided by a 21-member advisory committee and included input from hundreds of persons through surveys, public meetings, and focus groups. Public comment on the plan will be accepted until August 24. The plan will be up for approval by the Parks and Recreation Commission at its September 21 meeting, with City Council action expected in October.

The draft master plan and a comment form is available at <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/essential-spaces/>. Before printing the entire document, be advised that it is 426 pages long.

Lane Palmer
Ron Regal
Tom Burns

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting June 8, 2022

The June meeting featured: (1) a report on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Goals [<https://duluthmn.gov/media/13045/essential-spaces-community-survey-summary-of-results-final.pdf>], (2) the approval of the Hawk Ridge Reserve Mini-Master Plan [<https://duluthmn.gov/media/13625/hrbo-mp-narrative-6-8-22.pdf>]; and (3) and further business. The above links provide direct access to the full reports.

THE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN. In Summary, the Parks' Master Plan Goals are meant to establish a 10-year planning guideline for use at local parks, recreation areas, and among community groups. The report follows up on the April 2022 presentation of an earlier draft to the Commission. Some key features include (1) a review of the present use of Duluth's parks and recreation (69.6 % of households are within a 10-minute walk of the entrance to a public park); (2) Parks' goal of equity mapping identifying areas that need additional development in order to level access to parks and facilities. The Master Plan is using of national surveys and new analytical technologies to discover major trends, (e.g. dog parks are among the most popular items). Within Duluth, local surveys suggest that our system is most used for hiking, walking, wildlife observation, relaxing and contemplation.

Public engagement in the Overview was extensive: 60 focus groups; survey opinions from 1,962 respondents; 4 community workshops, and 8 community outreach events. Some of the preliminary findings include: (1) that 57% of Duluth residents use parks and green spaces at least once a week; (2) that residents note a lack of maps and kiosks with information on what to do while in the parks; and (3) that the majority of respondents favor the use of 3rd party providers to provide organized sports and special events.

Project Goals include among many: (1) sustaining the investment in parks; (2) stressing the uniquely Duluth experiences, especially water access; (3) bolstering relationships and partnerships that provide sporting events and activities; and (4) sustaining natural areas.

The goal is to place the Plan before the City Council this year.

THE HAWK RIDGE NATURE PRESERVE.

Janelle Long of Hawk Ridge presented a summary of their Mini-Master Plan. The documentation and illustrations are very much worth a peek. There was unanimous praise from the entire Commission, noting that Hawk Ridge provides a host of educational opportunities for all ages and groups and attracts visitors from all across the nation. Plans include (1) better safety in regards to the interactions between automobile traffic and pedestrians, (2) a completely ADA compliant nature path, (3) a picnic shelter and restroom. With these new amenities will come a greater need to minimize opportunities for vandalism and misuse especially after hours. The projected budget of \$2 to 2.5 million will be spread out over 2 to 3 phases. The Commissioners voted their approval to move to Council unanimously and enthusiastically.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: Speaking for the Board of the Friends of the Lakewalk, a citizen requested that Parks and Recreation do everything it can to maintain full public access to those sections of the Lakewalk undergoing renovation and maintenance. This goal was accomplished while extensive work was done last year near 20th Avenue East. The Friends are especially concerned that the Lakewalk be kept open during work at Brighton Beach.

The next meeting of the Commission will be on Wednesday, August 10, 2022, at 5:00P in the Council Chambers.

Submitted by Ron Regal, Tom Burns, and Lane Palmer

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting April 13, 2022 and Lakewalk Updates

The April meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission was in person only and not attended, so our summary of the meeting will await the minutes from the April meeting. The only new business on the agenda was an update on the Zoo Master Plan and Upcoming Accreditation. With Lakewalk use ramping up when winter finally says good-bye, here are updates on previously agreed upon Lakewalk work and closures. The planned Lakewalk and Brighton Beach project (<https://duluthmn.gov/media/12488/210260-20211007-lw-bb-report.pdf>) lays out extensive work along the Lakewalk including rerouting of parts to be less susceptible to shoreline erosion. Starting in 2022, Phase 1 work will begin on the Lakewalk section from Endion Station up to Fitgers along with ADA and safety reroutes from 21st Avenue to 26th Avenue and is expected to be completed by spring 2023. The Brighton Beach (Kitchi Gammi Park) Lakewalk extension construction was completed in October 2021, and the park is now open with LIMITED ACCESS to pedestrians, sportspersons, paddlers, and cyclists only. Motor vehicle access to the park, including parking, will not be restored until the road reconstruction project has been completed in the spring of 2023. Patrons are asked to park vehicles at Lester Park or the public lot near the sky-blue tourist information hut. Brighton Beach will need to be closed in its entirety (including the Lakewalk) again in spring of 2022 for shoreline restoration, followed by construction and the installation of new park amenities. Work will continue into 2023 to relocate the road away from the shoreline and to restore the shoreline to better endure Lake Superior storms. Updates on construction and closures will be updated at the Friends of the Lakewalk website. Construction Updates are found in pull down links on the Home Page, <https://www.friendsofthelakewalk.org/>

Submitted by Ron Regal, Tom Burns, and Lane Palmer

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting March 9, 2022

Janelle Long, director of the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, presented a draft site plan for Hawk Ridge that details improvements and expansion for visitors and education programs. The number of visitors for the fall migration at Hawk Ridge has grown to 18,000 per year. A major challenge for HRBO is accommodating the increasing number of visitors and participants safely. A primary goal is to get more of the activities away from the immediate vicinity of Skyline Parkway, where much of the activity has been concentrated in the past. The proposal includes a plan for a 50 seat amphitheater, group learning areas, a picnic shelter, improvements to the trail system, and permanent restrooms. The plan will be considered by the Parks and Recreation Commission at its April 13 meeting; if approved, it will go to City Council for final action.

To view a summary of the plan to date, which includes a link to the HRBO presentation, go to <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/hawk-ridge/>

Director Jessica Peterson also presented an overview of Parks and Recreation Capital Projects.

The total parks capital budget exceeds \$14.7 million, over half of which is accounted for by conveyance of County tax forfeited land (\$4.4 million) and St Louis River Natural Area land acquisition (\$3.7 million). Major parks improvement programs are Lincoln Park Restoration at \$2.7 million, Hartley Legacy Project at \$2 million, and Enger Park Golf Course Renovation at \$4.5 million. City sources of funding for parks amounts to about \$4.2 million. A variety of state, federal and private grants and donations, plus \$4 million in revenue bonds for the Enger Park Golf Park renovation cover the rest.

Submitted by Lane Palmer

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, January 12, 2022

This was a straightforward meeting that elicited no public comments.

The links below give details for the topics covered.

Amanda Crosby introduced James Jones as a new commissioner representing District 4.

Presentations were delivered on Courage Kenny (Eric Larson), the Natural Resource Management Plan (Diane Desotelle), and the Duluth Lakewalk Renewal and Brighton Beach Resiliency Plan (Cliff Knettel).

Courage Kenny (<https://www.facebook.com/Couragekennynorthland>) has been providing adaptive recreational options for persons with disabilities, both permanent and temporary such as a hip replacement. Participants range from 4-91 years of age.

The Natural Resource Management Program Plan (Draft:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/00abecfcf0124d2b9e7c6d103e7ad63f>) largely focuses on the process to be used in making plans for management of natural resources. The page on Plans for 2022

(<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/00abecfcf0124d2b9e7c6d103e7ad63f?item=5>) shows maps of proposed projects. For some of the dots, selecting the dot yields a description of the project. But, “Most of these proposed projects are not funded, and therefore, the NRMPP partners are responsible to determine ultimately what work can be accomplished and what will have to be postponed. It is highly likely that most of the initial work will be centered around seeking funding.”

The planned Lakewalk and Brighton Beach project (<https://duluthmn.gov/media/12488/210260-20211007-lw-bb-report.pdf>) lays out extensive work along the Lakewalk including rerouting of parts to be less susceptible to shoreline erosion. Phase 1 work will be on the section from the corner past Canal Park up to Fingers along with ADA and safety reroutes from 21st Avenue to 26th Avenue and is expected to be completed by spring 2023. Phase 1 also includes road and shoreline work at Brighton Beach with the new road slated to be completed in 2023. The Parks Commission unanimously approved the Lakewalk Renewal and Brighton Beach Resiliency Plan.

Submitted by Ron Regal, Lane Palmer, and Tom Burns

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, September 15, 2021

This special meeting, held on WEBEX, focused on the Enger Park Golf Course Renovation Plan. In effect, the plan represents the culmination of months of lively deliberation about the future of public golf in Duluth. The plan is available at: <https://duluthmn.gov/media/12116/enger-park-golf-course-renovation-plan-final.pdf>.

With the termination of the Lester Park golf course, the plan covers needed improvements to the Enger Park course as the remaining public golf course in Duluth. Recommendations are given for four consecutive phases: Phase 1a – critical irrigation improvements, Phase 1b – clubhouse replacement, Phase 2 - critical golf course renovations, and Phase 3 – driving range and course playability improvements. Funding would be through 20 year-bonds to be paid back by course revenue plus receipts from sale of a parcel from Lester Park golf course.

Commissioner comment included a consideration by Commissioner Darland to move the parking lot across Skyline Drive, for safety reasons. Public comment was generally supportive, although there was some concern about “post-COVID” revenue assumptions – course fees, number of season passes sold, etc.

The plan was approved with a unanimous vote; the plan next goes to the City Council for their action.

Lane Palmer
Ron Regal
Tom Burns

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, June 9, 2021

The Commission meeting was held on WEBEX. The NEXT MEETING of the Commission will be Wednesday, 11 August, perhaps face-to-face.

The June meeting was entirely informational; no action [a vote to move an item to Council] was requested. Eric Birkeland, Property and Facilities Manager presented an update on the Baywalk Project to the Commission, since Cliff Knettel, Senior Parks Planner was unable to attend. Birkeland explained that the focus of the Baywalk Project was consideration of repairs and upgrades to the area behind the DECC. This could include upgrades to the seawall to enable cruise ships to dock, some perhaps as long as 600 ft., with hundreds of passengers. If this were to happen it would probably require facilities to assist foreign passengers in going through customs.

A second major consideration will be whether to close off a major part of Harbor Drive to normal vehicular traffic, while keeping it open for pedestrians, biking, and delivery and sanitation vehicles. "To not look like a street, but function like one when necessary." The target date for a proposal to proceed is August 2021. This initial proposal will need Council approval before applications for state bonding funds can be submitted. The guiding principles will be: (1) To "Take Back the Street"; (2) Water access and the protection of the Ecology of the Bay; (3) Building Resilience to withstand change, particularly from future storm damage; (4) to Reinforce the public image of Duluth; and (5) Maximizing the zone's flexibility in order to support appropriate usage throughout the year.

Next, Jess Peterson, Parks Manager, presented a Master Planning Overview, a once a decade project last completed in 2010. In March of 2021, an RFP was announced seeking applicants for principal consultancy for the project. Four applications were received. Earlier on 9 June -- the same day as this meeting of the Commission -- the city signed an agreement with Design Workshop based in Denver, Colorado, to be that consultancy. The effort will be led by Anna Laybourn with Callie New as Project Manager. The Parks and Recreation Department plans to have full community engagement throughout the planning process for the new Master Plan, and the Design Workshop has deep and proven experience leading such community involvement efforts.

The goal is to move along a time line to completion between now and the end of the summer of 2022, while keeping in mind five questions and considerations: (1) What do we have now; (2) What do we need to improve and/or add; (3) Proceed to build a set of recommendations for the Council's consideration; (4) Design and Create the necessary documentation to support adoption and implementation of the Master Plan's key elements; and (5) in general, create a plan to Guide Parks and Recreation for the City of Duluth for the next 10 years. For more info contact: Cliff Knettel [cknettel@duluthmn.gov, (218) 730-4312].

The third item of business was an informational report on the Public Golf Committee presented by Commissioner David Demmer, Chair of the committee. The City has kicked off discussions of the Enger Golf Course Renovation Project with consultants. A central issue is accessibility. A second is consideration of where public golf fits in the recreational offerings of the community, factoring in the existence of private golf courses in the area. Demmer suggested to his colleagues that they should expect to receive a presentation of key concepts for the renovation as early as its August meeting.

Finally, Commission President, Amanda Crosby asked Parks Manager, Jess Peterson to note some of the most significant points brought out in the Parks Department's divisional reports.

Peterson noted that although, for the first time in years, the P&R Department was fully budget for staffing, the staff remained about 30% down because of a lack of qualified applicants. She also noted that most people are still more interested in reserving outdoor spaces than the use of building spaces and that all regular senior dining centers in the City were now operating as usual.

Respectfully Submitted, Tom Burns, Lane Palmer, Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission - March 10, 2021

Amanda Crosby, President of the Commission, called the meeting to order. The meeting opened with Jess Peterson, Parks Manager, introducing the new Parks Project Coordinator, Todd Armbruster to the commissioners. His first assignment will be the renovation of the Enger Golf Course. There followed presentations and discussions of the two main topics being placed before the Commission: (1) an Overview of the Parks Fund by Jess Peterson and Jim Filby Williams, Director of Parks, Properties, and Libraries; and (2) a request for Action, a vote of the Commission, on the Waabizheshikana Heritage Interpretation Plan, presented by Cliff Knettel, Senior Planner. In addition to these two items, commissioner David Demmer, Chair of the Public Golf Committee, and Jim Filby Williams presented updates on matters relating to Duluth Public Golf.

The Parks Fund is comprised of two distinct aspects: (1) the Parks Funding Budget, and (2) the Parks Maintenance Budget. A third budgetary aspect, Property and Facilities Management, is also a part of the Parks' funding budget but is treated separately. A central feature of the Parks Fund was fixed by the City's Parks Master Plan of 2010, passed by Council in 2011, which established a base annual funding level of \$2.6 million without automatic adjustments for inflation. The result of the lack of adjustment has been an annual loss of purchasing power, calculated now as a negative 15% of spending value since 2011. Even in 2011, the budgetary health of Parks was not the best, because of the massive cuts brought about by the 2007-08 Great Recession. To give the funding situation a human face, Jess pointed out that in 2007 Parks had 17.6 FTE [Full Time Equivalent employees], and a year later it had 6 FTE. Presently, there are 13.7 FTE, which, because of the sharp decline of tourist dollars revenue during the Covid pandemic, had to be reduced to a minimum for several months. In short, the Parks Fund is capable of funding only 50% of what the 2010 master plan had set forth as being necessary. In the meantime, the City of Duluth has added substantial new acreage to the city's parks system. The 2021 Parks and Recreation budget for all purposes is set at \$3.24 million: 80% [the 2.6 million established in 2010-11 and based upon property taxes] with the remainder deriving from the city's General Fund and \$200K from the Tourist Tax. Parks this year is initiating a new 10-year Master Planning process.

Next commissioner David Demmer and director Filby Williams outlined the next steps for Duluth Public Golf. Succinctly, the Lester course will be minimally maintained until 2023, when it will be brought up to playable standards for one season only while the course at Enger is renovated and enhanced with a new club house and an affordable irrigation system with a secure water allocation. The plan is for Enger to reopen for the 2024 golfing season. At that time Lester will be permanently closed to golf. These decisions have been made after extensive discussion with the stakeholders and the Committee for Duluth Public Golf. Making these decisions has been painful to all involved; however, Duluth's financial realities combined with the anticipation that the number of rounds of golf played on Duluth courses will continue to follow the national trend in escalating decline has left no viable solutions to the magnitude of the problem other than closing one of our public golf courses. City Councilor Arik Forsman, a golfer, and a member of the Public Golf Committee, spoke in support of both the process followed and the decisions made in order to Save Public Golf in Duluth. Discussion followed and included numerous comments from citizens as well as commissioners. There was some confusion as to whether the end of golf at Lester meant the closure of Lester Park itself. That fear was quickly dispelled. The fact is that Lester Park's 260 acres are not endangered by the

cessation of one activity taking place there. Filby Williams made clear the financial situation and the imperative need to stop the hemorrhaging of public funds that threatened other city initiatives, stating that at present the city is losing about \$200K per annum on its two courses, approximately the same on each. In order to bring order and predictability to this aspect of the city's budget, a way must be found to erase the loss [200k] and fund the amount that will be due annually to service the loans that the city will have assumed in order to adequately renovate golf at Enger (loan payments estimated at \$300K per annum). Or to look at the problem as simply as possible, the city must "swing" a half million dollars within a finite budget to renovate and sustain public golf. The challenges are daunting.

The presentation of Waabizheshikana/Marten Trail Heritage Interpretation Plan was exhilarating and refreshing. Once complete the seven-mile trail is likely to become the crown jewel in Duluth's parks system and hopefully a center piece of the National Trail System. Cliff Knettel walked the commissioners through a marvelous panorama of art, stone markers, artistic depictions, and ten-foot stainless steel information poles (readily repairable or inexpensively replaceable), with a total of 38 interpretative panels. Those walking the trail, or even relatively short sections of it, will glimpse the rich and diverse cultural and natural heritage that is uniquely ours. Through a collection of "stories" the ideas of the original native peoples are visually brought to fore. Their "stories" often focus upon the interconnection of humans and the natural world in which animals like "the Marten" become principal actors on the historical stage, so too native plants that nurture and heal. The Ojibwe language and culture are rooted in respect for the landscape, and so form a natural template for understanding many of Duluth's past and present "stories." For example, African-American workers moved here to work in the steel mill, and loggers literally rode our rivers. Longshoremen loaded iron ore mined in Minnesota to build and rebuild our nation. Our paper underlaid the newspapers of America. The trail's interpretative components will tell the "Story" of the St. Louis Estuary including on-going efforts to clean up and rehabilitate its natural environment. There will be maps, animal profiles, river places, and life ways.

The estimated cost of close to \$600K hopefully will be funded by a broad assortment of federal, state and local agencies and organizations. The timeline for completion is long, for all the property is not yet even in the public domain. Some of the projected route is in the process of detoxification, and elsewhere relocation of existing soils and manmade construction needs to be completed and integrated into the design. Although it is perhaps needless to say, the Commission voted unanimously to forward the plan with its full and enthusiastic support to the City Council.

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting of the Commission will be at 5:00P on Wednesday, April 14.

Respectfully Submitted, Tom Burns, Lane Palmer, Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, January 13, 2021

Amanda Crosby, president, called the meeting to order. There were no items on the agenda that required the Commission's action, that is a formal vote whether to recommend to the City Council. There were, however, three informational presentations: 1) Cliff Knettel, senior planner, presented a draft of the Waabizheshikana Heritage Interpretation Plan; 2) Jess Peterson, parks manager, presented a Capital Overview for 2021; and 3) Knettel and Jim Filby Williams, director of parks, properties and libraries, provided an update on plans for the coming year relating to the Lakewalk and Sea Wall

Repair Project.

1) **Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail** [pronounced, waa-bah-zhay-kuh-nuh] formerly the Western Waterfront Trail. Cliff Knettel briefed the Commission on the progress on plans for the trail made since its renaming and the discussions with the Commission (13 November 2019). His report stressed the cultural and heritage components. The trail represents a balance of Indigenous culture, civic needs for recreation, historic heritage, and the natural environment. The current 3.3-mile path will ultimately measure 10 miles in length and run roughly parallel to the railroad. When complete, the entire trail system will link Jay Cooke SP and the Gitchi-Gami Bicycle Trail along the north shore and much else. With the cooperation of the City, US Steel, and the EPA, the clean-up of the former site of the US Steel plant has resumed, this time focusing upon safely removing the toxic materials from the built area of the plant itself. Previous efforts had focused on removing or containing toxic sediment from the St. Louis River estuary. The plan will provide guidance as repairs and improvements are implemented with much greater attention being paid to ADA compliance in all sections. Some modest improvements, such as planting saplings of native trees and the installation of a few benches, have already begun. Much work lies ahead. Stay tuned for progress reports over the ensuing decade concerning these exciting developments.

2) Jess Peterson presented an overview of the 2021 Capital Budget for parks and trails: \$7,744,477, broken down to roughly \$6 million for parks and \$1.7 for trails. The primary PARK items include: 1) \$2.126 million for Lincoln Park restoration, which had been delayed because of the need to respond to DNR questions; 2) the Hartley Legacy Project, which includes renovations, expansion and signage, \$1.721 million; 3) general parks Maintenance, \$1.227 million; and 4) the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, \$200,000. The Trail segment of the budget includes: 1) the Brighton Beach Lakewalk extension, \$680,000 [Brighton is currently closed for road removal and ground preparation until spring 2021 with road access closed at the NE entrance until late in 2021]; 2) Fairmont Snowmobile Trail reconstruction, \$565,000; 3) Waabizheshikana Trail storm damage repair, \$487,000; DWP Rail-to-Trail Conversion to a multi-use fully accessible trail with a 6+ mile equestrian loop [5.5 miles now completed], \$83,000.

Additionally, and as a separate budget item and laying the groundwork for the following report by Jim Filby Williams, Peterson briefed the Commission on the projected budget for Seawall Repair and Surface improvement along the Lakewalk, which is now 90% complete in front of the Canal Park motels. Since many components of the repairs are funded by FEMA and the State Bonding Project on a "for cost basis," exact budgets cannot be fixed at this time but the total expected ranges from \$18 to \$22 million: from the State and FEMA, but from the feds only

for specific sections of the Lakewalk damaged in 2012, \$13.5 million; from the federal Economic Development Administration, up to \$4.5 million; from the City of Duluth, \$2 to 6.5 million.

3) Jim Filby Williams then presented the City's plan for the Lakewalk and Sea Wall Repair Project, stressing that the Lakewalk repairs were repairs to storm damage, primarily from the disastrous 2012 storm event, NOT a wholesale restructuring. Brighton Beach repairs are being derived from FEMA primarily. In order to tap into much of the state and federal funds, much surveying and pre-design work was and will be needed beforehand. He presented a color-coded map of the Lakewalk, including the Baywalk Seawall, at the DECC and where the city proposes a dock for cruise ships. Filby

Williams stressed the need to be visionary in planning and to seek cooperation among multiple stakeholders in order for these projects to reach fulfillment. The goals for Lakewalk, where possible, include repairs and restoration from the corner at Endion to the base of 21st Avenue East: especially, trail realignment to mitigate damage from future storms;

formalization of lake access; elimination of "social trails;" conducting lighting studies; and making an assessment of the infrastructure beneath the Lakewalk such as water mains, electrical connections, and sewers. General considerations will include: increasing the trail capacity in heavily used areas, the placement of trail amenities such as benches, installing fencing, and the removal of foreign debris.

Amanda Crosby pointed out, prior to the election of officers for the coming year, that the commission has two vacancies to fill and three terms ending soon. These openings represent opportunities for interested readers of The Voter to consider engaging more directly in influencing city policy-making in regard to Parks and Recreation throughout Duluth.

Amanda Crosby will continue as President of the Commission, and David Demmer will take his seat as Vice President.

In accordance with the newly adopted meeting schedule that reduced the number of monthly meetings to seven, the next meeting of the Commission will be on Wednesday, March 10, at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Tom Burns, Lane Palmer, Ron Regal

Parks and Recreation Commission December 9, 2020 via Webex

The main agenda item was an informational presentation, the annual year in review for the Parks and Recreation department for 2020. This was presented by Parks Manager Jessica Peterson and Assistant Parks Manager Alicia Watts.

Overall, the department had to continually adapt to comply with new restrictions and refinements of government executive orders and CDC guidance, from masks and social distancing to closure of indoor facilities and programs. At the same time, interest and participation in dispersed outdoor activities such as walking and mountain biking in the parks grew substantially.

The number of reservations for indoor park facilities was down, from 244 in 2019 to 32 in 2020. Likewise the facility revenues fell from \$20,585 in 2019 to \$4,525 in 2020. There were 67 permits for weddings on park property in 2020, down from 95 in 2019, and permits for buskers (e.g., along the Lakewalk) were down somewhat from 40 to 35. Permits for activities involving alcohol consumption in parks and park facilities were down from 69 in 2019 to 22 in 2020.

The department had 10,400 participants in 35 different programs. Bayfront Park rink counted 1,193 skaters last winter. The number of Facebook followers grew from 5,300 in last year to 8,100 in 2020. For the most part, scheduled trail work and other park improvements were able to proceed as planned. This was considered especially important for projects funded by federal and other outside grant sources, so that requirements for timely project completion could be met. In the natural resources' enhancement category, the department continued to remove invasive species and replace with native plants, and the St Louis River and Hartley Natural Areas were created.

A new City Code section (35-9.5) was adopted which will formalize the process of accepting and maintenance of memorials in in the parks.

In other business, the Commission adopted a new schedule for meetings in 2021 which will reduce the number Commission meetings from twelve to seven (January, March, April, June, August, October and December). The rationale for this was to restrict meetings to those that require Commission action, and thereby make more efficient use of Commissioners' and staff time.

Submitted by Ron Regal, Tom Burns, Lane Palmer

Parks and Recreation Commission, November 18, 2020 via Webex

After Commission president, Amanda Crosby, called the meeting to order and took the roll, Jess Peterson, Parks Manager, introduced Senior Parks Planner, Cliff Knettel. Next Diane Desotelle, Natural Resources Coordinator, outlined the natural resources management plan. Commissioner David Demmer stressed the importance for a city like Duluth with so much green space to have such a central plan. Jess Peterson asked how the Coordinator's position is funded, and Desotelle indicated that there were two sources of funding within the city's budgeting structure: the Parks Fund and the Facilities Management Division.

Next up, Jess again took the floor and presented an update on Lincoln Park and the status of Lincoln Park Drive, which the Commission had previously voted to remove in favor of having a trail only. It turns out that the National Parks Service challenged the city to come up with a plan that would keep the road in place. Commissioner Jill Joyce asked whether the costs of various suggestions were being included in the analysis process. Jess replied that making needed repairs would extend the road's lifespan.

The final item fell under "Old Business," as all would agree. Jim Filby-Williams, Director, presented an informational report on "Golf Budgeting and the Planning Timeline." President Crosby questioned why minimal maintenance at Lester would be kept as an option, since it was potentially to close regardless. Commissioner Jenny Peterson asked for an explanation as to the source of funding for Duluth Public Golf. Jess responded that the General Fund, hoping for future profits, had previously accepted the debt, but that those profits had never materialized. Jim Filby-Williams made clear that the city's cumulative subsidies to golf now approached \$3 million dollars, and that this commitment had reduced the funds available for other much needed projects such as city streets and utilities. He added that after two decades of support the city has suffered significant losses.

The meeting adjourned at 7:06 pm.

Submitted by Ron Regal, Tom Burns, Lane Palmer

Duluth Parks and Recreation Meeting, October 14, 2020

Notes below are largely quoting from parts of Parks Department minutes of the meeting:

<https://duluthmn.gov/media/WebSubscriptions/95/20201119-95-12282.pdf>

Buildings and Facilities Update. Presented by Erik Birkeland, Property and Facilities Manager: This winter only three buildings will be open: Morgan Park Community Center, Washington Center Gymnasium, and Portman Community Center as posted at

<https://duluthmn.gov/media/10396/letter-to-parks-building-users.pdf>

Commissioner Jenny Peterson questioned how the decision came about for the three facilities that will remain open. Erik Birkeland said that the volume of use played a key factor. Portman has hockey in the basement and hosts the opportunity for rentals. Washington Center has the gym. Parks and Recreation Manager Jessica Peterson mentioned that Morgan Park and Portman have serviced the Senior Program in the past in collaboration with AEOA, which provided meal service. Commissioner Peterson indicated she understands the rationales but wondered why we couldn't have buildings in lower income areas. Jess Peterson mentioned that Grant Recreation Center had a tenant last year, but the tenant chose not to continue. Jim Filby Williams clarified that the public has been notified that Grant Recreation building will be demolished. Commissioner Britt Rohrbaugh stated that she feels like she is being punched in the gut. She said that the Grant to no longer be available. Commissioner Rohrbaugh said she has attended many events at Grant Recreation Center. Commissioner Demmer indicated he is still confused why some structures are being closed.

According to Erik Birkeland, special requests are reviewed on a weekly basis. Commissioner Peterson said that the Park Point Community Club is worried that once winterized, the Park Point Center will not be revived. Erik Birkeland indicated staff routinely check buildings to make sure the furnaces are still running and that water is shut-off. Jim Filby Williams indicated that due to the pandemic a large number of workers were laid off, limiting ability to keep the buildings clean and sanitized. The city has called people back to work, but many had chosen other jobs due to their immediate needs. There are many unfilled positions. Commissioner Natalie Chin asked how the reservation system works and if it is a first come first serve basis. Jessica Peterson said reservations are on a first come first serve basis and that the Parks and Recreation Department will work with the community clubs to make sure they have a space to meet and work with the general public as well. In the event of high demand with not enough buildings, Parks and Recreation would discuss this with the city's Property and Facilities Department.

Submitted by Ron Regal, Lane Palmer, Tom Burns

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, September 9, 2020

The Commission meeting was held on Webex; this report is primarily excerpted from Commission meeting minutes.

Diane Desotelle, Natural Resources Coordinator presented information on the annual city bow hunt. Commissioner David Demmer questioned if there is a long-term plan, or target, for the decline in the deer harvests. Phil Lockett, president of the Arrowhead Bowhunters Alliance, which administers the hunt, indicated there isn't an actual number, they focus on citizen complaints, number of dead deer on the roads, and focus on the hot spots to manage the numbers. Demmer indicated he supports this type of active management and would like to see continued conversations.

Megan Lidd, Provisional Assistant Manager reported on fall programming for the parks. Commissioner Jenny Peterson questioned how this year compares to last year in regard to participant numbers. Lidd indicated the numbers scaled back this spring without programs but were able to build up over the summer. She shared that limited staffing has impacted the ability to provide the additional programming. Commissioner Jill Joyce shared the positive feedback from the public regarding the Easter Egg Hunt in the spring.

Parks Manager Jess Peterson led a discussion of a proposed Memorial Program to be adopted in Chapter 35 of city ordinances. The new ordinance would clarify city policy and practice regarding public donations, for example park benches, to be designated as memorials. After discussion on various specific items, the Commission voted to table action on the draft ordinance until the October meeting.

Submitted by
Lane Palmer, Ron Regal, Tom Burns

Duluth Parks and Recreation Meeting on August 18, 2020

Taken largely quoting from parts of Parks Department minutes of the meeting:.

<https://duluthmn.gov/media/WebSubscriptions/95/20200910-95-12120.pdf>

Commissioner & Liaison Reports:

Commissioner Jill Joyce questioned if the closure of Lincoln Park Drive could be permanent. She indicated homelessness continues to be an issue at Lincoln Park and thanked Parks and Recreation staff for taking quick action on the reports

COVID-19 Parks and Recreation Updates (Informational) Jessica Peterson , Parks and Recreation Manager:

Commissioner David Demmer questioned if there is a vegetation plan for our open spaces. Jessica Peterson indicated our Natural Resources Coordinator is working on hiring a consultant on our natural resources plan. She shared that Park Maintenance is working on an internal management document.

Public Golf Committee (Informational) Jessica Peterson , Manager:

Jessica Peterson questioned if there could be more details of the exclusive agreement with a developer that will be going to City Council. She indicated that this doesn't mean this developer will be awarded, just that this allows the City to continue conversations with one developer. The award would be an additional step for City Council to review. She questioned how the Parks and Recreation Commission will be involved with this process.

Jessica Peterson indicated many wanted to speak tonight and are having trouble getting on. She is playing golf at Enger weekly. Concerns are the conditions; many people are choosing to golf elsewhere. Commissioner Barb Darland plays weekly at Enger and is considering moving league to another course. She requested Parks and Recreation to offer a reduced rate for the middle 9. Commissioner David Demmer questioned the process of how decisions are made for the management of the courses. He questioned who decides on the replacement of irrigation or roping off the middle 9. Jessica Peterson indicated she would need to review this documentation to provide information and said that the management company placed the rope closure.

Other Topics:

Commissioner David Demmer questioned if there would be changes to the Mini Master Plan for Lincoln Park. Jessica Peterson indicated this is a concept plan and has not made it to design. She shared that the City was contacted by the National Park Service to align more closely with the original park concept. Therefore the City has reengaged with LHB.

Ron Regal
Lane Palmer
Tom Burns

Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, July 8, 2020

Several topics of interest to the Commission were discussed at the July meeting: (1) the Memorial Bench Program; (2) COVID-19 procedures being implemented within the governor's evolving policies and the status of the Department's service and programming; and (3) the need to create a Spirit Mountain Task Force at the request of the mayor's office and the City Council.

Cheryl Skafte, Operations Coordinator, led off discussion of the Memorial Bench Program assisted by Jess Peterson, Manager. As a part of the Memorial Bench Program the Department has been interviewing people familiar with the foundation of various parks in order to better understand how that process has evolved and to ascertain whether those instrumental in their creation have been appropriately remembered with a bench in the park. Peterson noted that at present the City Code does not specifically mention the Bench Project, and she led a discussion as to whether it should be and, if so, where in the Code a statement might fit. The Commissioners supported some such inclusion, probably by adding a clause to Chapter 35.9 of the Code or by adding a new section. The Commission and Peterson agreed to work on language that could provide support within the Code for the continued evolution of the program, allowing for it to grow or shrink as the needs and available resources change.

Next, Jess Peterson gave an update on various aspects of the Department and its programs. Most importantly was news that all 4 of those laid off from Parks Maintenance had been rehired or had found new jobs. In addition, one technician had been hired in small engine repair. These slight improvements in staffing have already made it possible to (1) increase trash collection, (2) increase mowing, (3) evaluate athletic facilities in order to determine what needs can be remedied in what remains of the peak season within current staffing and budgetary constraints. Permits and Reservations at some parks opened as of July 10. The Parks Department is doing its best to develop plans to support sports and leagues within the governor's Pandemic operation Plan [PoP], but with a smaller than normal staff not all sports and leagues can expect to be supported. Summer Camps have reopened at Hartley Nature Center and Chester Bowl. The Park Point Beach House is now open from noon to 5pm, July 10 through Labor Day Weekend. Lake Superior Zoo has reopened its indoor exhibits. Duluth Indian Point Campground has reopened with limited site capacity within the PoP.

Jess Peterson and Jim Filby-Williams, Public Administration Director, next requested that the Commission recommend to the Council City the creation of a Spirit Mountain Task Force. They anticipate that the Task Force will start meeting soon and meet about once every other week and that furthermore, the Task Force would complete its charge within a short duration. The Task Force will require that at least one member of the Commission be among its members. Commissioner Noah Kramer volunteered.

There followed considerable discussion as to how the City could justify establishing a new Task Force when the Duluth Public Golf Committee has yet to meet and that all its meetings have been "cancelled until further notice." Jess and Jim pointed out that the Golf Committee was actually a sub-committee of the Commission and that existing staffing could not spare the people and funding to offer support at this time; moreover, that previously a Task Force on Public Golf had been so supported and had issued its report to Council. Upon further questioning from various commissioners, Peterson noted that the Department did not prioritize the Spirit Mountain Task Force, but rather the mayor's office and Council had done so. There was no further discussion on this issue, but the commissioners subsequently agreed to add as an agenda item for their August meeting a discussion as to whether to recommend to the Council that it extends the deadline for a decision on Duluth Public Golf courses for one year.

Submitted by Thomas Burns, Lane Palmer, Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, May 13, 2020

This Commission meeting was held on WEBEX.

The Parks and Recreation Commission welcomed Barb Darlane, the new Commissioner for District 5.

The main order of business was a presentation by Jessica Peterson and Jim Filby Williams, who provided updates on adjusted operations due to COVID-19. In general, the changes were aligned with the Governor's most recent Stay Safe order, but constrained by reductions to the park maintenance workforce. The full text of recent changes is available at:

<https://duluthmn.gov/media/WebSubscriptions/93/20200611-93-5947.pdf>

Highlights include permits and reservations for activities for up to 25 people at select parks locations, selectively opening up some park buildings for public programming, opening up playgrounds, and re-opening closed sections of Skyline Parkway for motor vehicles.

Submitted by Lane Palmer

Duluth Parks and Recreation Meeting: March 11, 2020

Cheryl Skafte noted that Citizen Pruning and Tree Health Monitoring Training will be offered on Friday March 20, 5-7 pm and Saturday March 21, 9:00-noon. See link at <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/volunteer/volunteer-calendar/>. She also presented on the reLEAF Duluth Program which engages citizens in Duluth's community forest (<https://duluthmn.gov/parks/volunteer/releaf-duluth/>) and Keep Duluth Clean Program (www.KeepDuluthClean.org live link after March 15.)

Joan Christenson, City Attorney, presented on the Open Meeting Law. Aspects of her interpretations were narrower than what this reporter would have expected including restrictions on certain emails between commissioners.

In the continued saga, the reconstituted Public Golf Committee meets Tuesday March 17 at 5 pm in the Parks Office. See current plans at <https://duluthmn.gov/media/8050/proposed-changes-to-ownership-and-use-of-public-green-space-in-the-lester-park-and-enger-park-areas.pdf>

Matt Andrews presented the revised Chester Bowl Shared Use Cross-Country Ski Trail. See <https://duluthmn.gov/media/9386/chester-shared-use-trail-03112020-parks-commission.pdf>. "Parks and Recreation staff recommendation: Align the Chester ski trails with all other City-groomed trails by designating the cross-country ski trails as single use only during grooming season, thereby disallowing shared use, including canine use, during the winter season to preserve the quality, safety, and experience of cross-country skiing on the cross-country ski trails within Chester Park." The change from the previous recommendation is that this plan does not include building a separate winter hiking trail. Many public comments were heard including walkers advocating for a shared use trail and skiers arguing for safer skiing only trail use. Commissioners gave detailed comments on how they chose to vote on the recommendation. The recommendation to allow skiing only on the Chester Park Ski Trail passed with only one vote against the proposal. A reason given by more than one commissioner was the issue of safety.

Submitted by Ron Regal, Lane Palmer, Tom Burns

Parks and Recreation Commission: February 12, 2020

The meeting was primarily devoted to presenting updates to the members of the Commission with but one item requiring action, that of an easement dedication to amend the Brighton Beach mini-master plan already approved by the City Council.

Mike Reuter, COGGS, led off with an informational report on “Snow Dog Grooming at Hartley.” No, a “snow dog” is not a dog that loves snow, but rather it is a \$3800 machine weighing 350 lbs. and designed exclusively for grooming ski trails. The necessary funds for the purchases were donated by users of the trails; first at Hartley, and most recently at Lester. There are several advantages to using snowdogs rather than snowmobiles dragging weighted sleds: snowdogs can groom tighter curves, they offer better compacting, and they are much easier to use than snowmobiles. The latter advantage is underscored by the fact that most of volunteers doing the grooming do not have snowmobile skills. The snowdogs groom a 32” wide strip. Last season the volunteers logged over 2700 hours grooming city ski trails. COGGS plans to move beyond grooming trails, and hopes to create an all-weather loop at several parks, potentially first at Central Park below Enger. Another of COGGS goals, a skills park has just been approved by the City and preliminary work has begun for it at Keene Creek. Public meetings will be announced soon.

Next Matt Andrews, Trails Coordinator, presented an informational update on “Signs and Wayfinding.” The Final Design Plan that was approved in March 2017 was a basic design package and did not provide sufficient detail to move into production. Fabrication and Installation Technical Specifications were created in June 2019, and in November the first signs started to appear. The Department has made substantial progress and has issued a 2020 Signage Implementation Plan for 19 Project Locations (11 Wayfinding and 8 at Park Entrances). The wayfinding signs include aids for mapping with GPS. Detailed data on remote trails will be available only to rescue personnel and includes data on accessibility for emergency vehicles.

The next item of business was a request for action on a Brighton Beach Trail Easement Dedication. This was necessary because the mini-masterplan previously approved by Council needs to be modified in the area of northernmost “Out lot” A, where the stone fireplace and small stone structure are presently located. This change accommodates the most recent wave action analysis. The motion passed with but one opposed. The matter will now go back to Council.

Finally, Matt Andrews offered an update (for future action) on the Upper Chester Bowl Trails, highlighting plans for 2020. The goals are to improve the quality of existing trails, rehabilitate trails posing erosion concerns, consolidate and improve public entry points, formalize some previously unsanctioned trails (user “pathways”), obliterate and re-vegetate unnecessary trail segments, and improve the connectivity of the trail system with an additional pedestrian bridge. When completed there will be three different types of signs at Chester Bowl: those at park entrances, trail markers, and those with maps at entrance point trails.

The next meeting of the Commission is on Wednesday, March 11.

Submitted by Thomas Burns, Lane Palmer, Ronald Regal

Parks and Recreation Commission, January 8, 2020

The meeting was primarily informational with only one action item coming before the commission for a vote -- the creation of a Golf Sub-Committee of the Commission's Committee on Public Golf.

Leading off the evening, Chris Severson, Permits Coordinator, reported on the permitting and reservations for 2019 along with a forecast for 2020. In 2019 permits were issued for numerous park events falling into the following categories: special events, private events, wedding permits, alcohol consumption permits, busker permits and commercial operator permits. Facility reservations were issued for the following community centers: Evergreen, Lafayette, Morgan Park, Piedmont, and Portman. Severson presented detailed statistical information on all aspects of permits and reservations including the revenues when generated. In general revenues are derived from the rental of built facilities at parks and community centers. In addition to these were revenues from new built elements such as rentals of the canoe/kayak racks at the three present locations: Brighton Beach, Chambers Grove, and Park Point.

Next, Lisa Luokkala reported on the Metro Land Acquisition of 44 acres of undeveloped forest land along Skyline Parkway in the Merritt Creek watershed. This addition to Duluth's protected lands was the result of a Conservation Partners Legacy Grant that will ensure an existing wildlife habitat corridor between Piedmont, Brewer, and state lands. It also provides for bow hunting and the removal of informal social trails. Similar grants have previously assisted projects along the St. Louis River Corridor (2016), Hartley Park (2017/18) and most recently Amity and Kingsbury Creeks (2019).

Jim Filby Williams then presented the Commissioners with a summary of the Parks and Trails Capital Projects and Funding Sources for 2020. The total parks and trails funding sources for 2020 is \$16,953,652, primarily derived from the ½ and ½ Tax, grants (mainly from the state) and donations, federal grants, and the Parks Fund. These funds will be used to address restoration and park development throughout the city, including at the Zoo, Spirit Landing, Lincoln Park, the Wade/Wheeler Ball Field, as well as at various neighborhood parks and other natural resources. The budget will also provide funds for the improvement and maintenance of trails throughout the system, both paved (crushed stone) and natural surface trails. Note that this specifically does not include the funds expected to be available in 2020 for Phase III of the Lakewalk Storm Recovery – Canal Park, which is anticipated to cost up to \$20 million and involve the purchase and placement of 70 thousand tons of cut stones, many of which weigh up to 10 tons each. All this will require careful coordination with the affected community groups and patience from Duluth's citizenry and visitors.

Finally, Jessica Peterson, Parks and Recreation Manager, presented a formal request that the Commission create a sub-committee of its Public Golf Committee, which itself had been previously approved by Council. Peterson assured the Commission that this action was being taken in accordance with the Commission's by-laws, which stipulated that the Parks and Recreation Commission "may periodically reassess the composition, charge and relevance of the Public Golf Committee" and therefore this subcommittee. The vote for approval was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Thomas S. Burns, Lane Palmer, Rona

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting, December 11, 2019

Diane Desotelle, Natural Resources Coordinator gave an informational presentation about the nomination of the proposed St Louis River Natural Area.

The purpose of the Duluth Natural Areas Program is to designate certain lands with environmental value as permanently protected natural places. The idea is to preserve Duluth's natural heritage for the public good by ensuring the city can better manage Duluth's forests, streams, and wetlands. Natural Area designation currently exists for Magney-Snively forest and is concurrently also being considered within Hartley Park.

The proposed St Louis River Natural Area consists of 9 specific project areas along the St. Louis River estuary, from Grassy Point to Chambers Grove in Fond du Lac. The City, in partnership with the Minnesota Land Trust, is in the process of collecting plant community and bird survey data and reviewing parcels to evaluate lands that meet the intention of the natural areas program. The adoption process for the management plan, a requirement to finalize the nomination, is as follows:

- Parks and Recreation Commission Action – January 2020
- Planning Commission Action – January 2020
- City Council Action – March 2020

Further details on the Duluth Natural Areas Program and the St Louis River Natural Area nomination may be found at: <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/natural-resources/dnap/>

In other actions, a proposed schedule of Commission meetings for 2020 was adopted. It will involve holding one of the Commission meetings in Morgan Park and one in the Lester Park neighborhood.

Director Jessica Peterson also reviewed a proposal for the membership, mission and activities of a new Golf Subcommittee of the Commission. After much discussion and consideration of significant amendments to the proposal, action on this item was tabled.

Submitted by, Thomas Burns, Lane Palmer, Ronald Regal

Parks and Recreation Commission, November 13, 2019

The commissioners approved the minutes of the October meeting without modification. These minutes will be soon be available on the Commission Website. <http://duluthmn.gov/boards-Commissions/parks-Recreation-Commission/>.

Commission president, Amanda Crosby, introduced Noah Cramer, the newest member of the Commission.

The Commission then took up the request for action from the Department of Parks and Recreation, as presented for the Department by Lisa Luokkala, concerning the Western Waterfront Trail, henceforth named the Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail (pronounced, waa-bah-zhay-kin-nun). Ricky DeFoe, an elder of the Fond du Lac Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa, explained the naming process which pays tribute to the Marten Clan who settled here and began construction of the first system of trails and portages. The plan being presented to the Commission for its recommendation before proceeding to the City Council is the result of over three years of planning and consultation with stake holders and design experts and represents a balance of indigenous culture, civic needs for recreation, historic heritage, and the natural environment. The plan incorporates the

design of the historic and scenic Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad and preserves the full length of its route. The current 3.3-mile path will ultimately measure 10 miles in length and run roughly parallel to the railroad. In one section the distance of separation will be quite close, as little as 4.5 feet, but the trains will yield right-of-way to pedestrians and be limited to 10mph. Equestrians and motorized vehicles will not be allowed on the trail. The path will be built over the course of the next decade, and it will include a section passing through the lands of the former US Steel plant, now listed as a toxic chemical site. When complete the trail will link Jay Cooke SP and the Gitchi-Gami Trail along the north shore. Negotiations between the City, US Steel, and the EPA are moving ahead. Citizen comment was universally enthusiastic in its support. The representative from the railroad underscored that the railroad was now poised to take advantage of its newly established security to raise funds in order to make needed repairs and begin many improvements, including paying much greater attention to ADA compliance. The Commission voted unanimously in favor of passing the plan along to the City Council.

Next, Jessica Peterson, Manager, Parks and Recreation, then gave an **Update on Duluth Public Golf**. The present plan has been developed over the course of many meetings with stake holders, especially the Friends of Duluth Public Golf, and was drafted only after the City Council had given its approval to key aspects. Succinctly, the city's two golf courses are in extremely poor shape, needing over \$4 million dollars in repairs and renovations at the Enger course alone, where the club house needs emergency repair merely to open for the 2020 season and where 80% of the sprinkler heads are irreparable because at their age replacement parts do not exist. The City plan, as it now rests, proposes as a goal the retention of 27 holes of golf at Enger and 18 at Lester Park. The Lake 9 course at Lester alone would cease to exist. The fundamental question boils down to money. How can the City raise the necessary funds within a short enough time frame to continue operations while making crucial repairs and renovations to essential infrastructure at both courses?

The plan is to sell a 10-acre parcel of park land at Enger, mainly in the area of the current parking lot, and 50 acres of undeveloped land at Lester. The Council has approved rezoning these parcels: those at Enger to R.2 (Residential – Urban) and at Lester to R.R.1 – MU – N (Mixed Use Neighborhood) and P.1(Park and Open Space). In exchange the City will seek to acquire 450 acres of unprotected tax-forfeited land adjacent to Lester Park and formally

designate it as protected park land. Requests for Ideas [RFIs] and Requests for Proposals [RFPs] have gone out. The RFPs went out to housing developers; the RFIs to a wider audience. Responses to the RFPs are due on the 20th of November. The resulting proposals will then be reviewed by a Citizen Review Panel comprised of 5 members to include representatives from various stake holder groups and the prior advisory committee. Any sale of public park land always requires a super majority vote of approval by the City Council, something not easily obtained. The Council will have to vote accordingly should the issue of sale be formally requested in this case of public golf. The City will also have to hire a new management company to oversee the public golf courses.

The commissioners, the citizens, and members of the Parks and Recreation staff exchanged ideas in a spirited and constructive manner, primarily over whether alternative income streams could be found that would not require the sale of public park land, and whether a master plan should be initiated immediately, Jim Filby- Williams, Director of Public Administration, did not believe that such funding could be found in the scale necessary, especially given the desperate condition of our golf courses and the cost of even basic repairs. He also noted that too many unknowns still exist to warrant the diversion of our limited funds and staff to produce a meaningful master or mini-master plan at this time.

The motion to adjourn was approved unanimously.

Submitted by, Thomas Burns, Lane Palmer, Ronald Regal

Parks and Recreation Commission, September 11, 2019

Erik Simonson, Chief Executive Officer, presented the Lake Superior Zoo Master Plan for information study. A News Tribune summary can be seen at <http://www.duluthnewtribune.com/business/2297487-Duluth-Zoo-unveils-40-million-master-plan>. Matt Andrews, Trails Coordinator, presented the proposed plan for the current Chester Parks Shared Use Ski Trail for action by the Commission. Parks finds that a shared pedestrian and ski trail is not working, with degradation of the ski trails being a primary issue, and recommended building a separate pedestrian trail as in other parks at a cost of around \$15,000 with sufficient volunteer efforts. Nowhere else in the state are there any shared use trails requiring a Minnesota cross-country ski pass. Parks would not continue to request state funding for grooming of these trails given the degraded condition of the ski trail. Extensive public comments were widely divergent. A recurrent comment by some commissioners and the audience was skepticism that walkers would stay off a groomed trail when the walking trail is more difficult. Parks and Rec Manager Jessica Peterson said that social enforcement is working in other parks areas with separate ski and pedestrian paths. The motion to construct a separate pedestrian walking path received a tie 4-4 vote which was not sufficient to go forward with the recommendation.

Lisa Luokkala presented the Western Waterfront Trail Mini-Master Plan for future action. This was the seventh time this topic has been presented to the commission, but parts of the plan have changed overtime. In particular, there will be a Rails and Trails theme in concert with the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad rather than a required shortening of the rail line to accommodate the trail. See the News Tribune article <https://www.duluthnewtribune.com/news/government-and-politics/4612982-City-recommends-western-Duluth-rail-line-be-preserved>. The next time the trail plan is on the agenda, the commission will be voting on the proposal.

Submitted by Ron Regal

Parks and Recreation Meeting, August 14, 2019

Jessica Peterson, Manager, introduced Chris Severson, the new Parks Permit Coordinator. This was followed by three important presentations that will come before the Commission for action and a vote at the fall meetings (two on 11 September and one on 9 October) with but two weeks for public comment prior to each.

Matt Andrews, Trails Coordinator, presented the current “Chester Park Shared Use Ski Trail Recommendation” calling for an abandonment of the shared-use the trail, currently used by both pedestrians and Nordic skiers, and the building of a separate pedestrian only trail while maintaining the existing trail for the exclusive use by skiers. The need for a new pedestrian-only trail follows several months of study concerning the usage and compliance levels of the existing shared trail. The new pedestrian-only trail would require building about 2700 feet of new trail, but most of it would use existing footpaths, of which there are a great many. Citizen comments reflected a general support for the continuance of the shared-trail concept. Commissioner Demmer pointed out that the principal non-compliance issue related to hikers with unleashed dogs, in clear violation of city ordinance. Jessica Peterson pointed out that the problem of dogs off leash was a contentious issue and serious problem in all city parks. The department will come before the Commission on **11 September** requesting a vote on its recommendation. **There is now a two-week period for further citizen comment.**

Next, Jim Shoberg, Senior Parks Planner, assisted by Jennifer Moses gave a short review of the Campus Connector Trail Mini-Master Plan. In general this trail will ultimately connect various educational institutions throughout the city. When completed the trail will also offer a vertical integration (up and downhill towards the Lake) for use by pedestrians and non-motorized transportation such as bicycles.

The trail will begin in close proximity to the Lowell Elementary School, connect the College of Saint Scholastica, UMD, and end at the Lakewalk at 32d avenue East. No cost projections have been developed, but many sections of this trail already exist. No funds are presently available and none are expected for at least eight years. Citizen comments were generally favorable, but issues of privacy and security remain to be explored fully. The department will come before the Commission on **11 September** requesting a vote. **There is now a two-week period for further citizen comment.**

Finally, Jessica Peterson and Lisa Luokkala presented an update on the “Western Waterfront Trail Extension” for future action. The recommendation is for a “Trail with Rail Alignment.” This dual and parallel separation of a traditional trail and the continued existence of the historic tourist train route is new and represents a guarded solution for the difficult trail sections 1 and 5. Outside experts continue their work. The department is “cautiously optimistic” that solutions can be found in each case. Citizen comment noted that, if the causeway is eliminated, no study has been made as to the impact this would have upon existing plants and animals that live in the areas long protected from wave action by the causeway. In general, comments from both commissioners and the citizenry were highly supportive. The department will come before the Commission on **11 September** with the presentation of a full draft. That meeting will be followed by a two-week period for public comment. **The department plans to request action from the Commission at its meeting on 9 October 2019.**

Submitted by Tom Burns, Lane Palmer and Ron Regal

Duluth Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting, July 10, 2019

The plan revision for Brighton Beach discussed at the June meeting was brought up for a vote. A commissioner raised concerns that the setback of facilities from the lakeshore may not be enough to avoid future damage. City staff clarified that the setback line represented 10 vertical feet elevation above the mean lake level, and was considered adequate damage protection. After some further discussion, the plan was approved 6-1 and sent to the city council for action at their August meeting.

An update was provided on the plan for extension of the Western Waterfront Trail from Munger Landing to Fond du Lac. The focus was on feasibility for trail construction on several segments of the trail. BNSF railroad right-of-way issues exist for Segment 1, from Spring Street to Munger Landing. Segment 3, which involves an EPA superfund site, will require funds from EPA and US Steel. Segment 5, which includes shoreline along Mud Lake, involves decisions on the retention/removal of a causeway used by the excursion railroad (LS&MR). Public comment mainly favored retention of the causeway for railroad use, with some suggestion that a parallel trail was feasible. Further discussion of the plan update is scheduled for the August Commission meeting.

More detail on the location of the Segments is available from the 2017 WWF Plan at:
<https://duluthmn.gov/media/7325/final-draft-public-meeting-2-presentation-61317.pdf>

Submitted by Lane Palmer

Duluth Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting, June 12, 2019

Parks and Recreation staff presented a draft revision to the plan for Brighton Beach which focused on extension of the Lakewalk through the park, connecting to the Scenic Drive, and a significant relocation of the existing road through the park. The general plan is to move the road and other infrastructure inland, including the new path, in light of recent and periodic damage from high storm waves. The road would also become one-way, with designated parking and new intersections with the Scenic Drive. The result would be more usable green space and reducing conflicts among cars, bikes, and walkers, as well as reducing future storm damage.

Grant funds have already been secured for the Lakewalk extension, and the proposal is to begin construction in the summer of 2020. However, the road relocation has yet to be funded. Since the Lakewalk extension will be located partially on the existing roadway, road access will be closed off or restricted at times until the new road is funded and built. Staff acknowledged that the sequencing of the Lakewalk project ahead of the road project was not ideal, but apparently the trail funds need to be spent soon.

Further information about this project is available at: <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/brighton-beach/>

Submitted by Lane Palmer

Parks and Recreation Commission, May 8, 2019

Two informational presentations opened the meeting. Cheryl Skafte, Volunteer Coordinator, led off with a discussion of the "Poop Fairy Campaign," which is trying to lend a bit of humor to the terribly important problem of pet waste in our public areas. According to the Veterinary Medical Association there are roughly 19,350 dogs in the Duluth area, generating 4 million pounds of feces being "dumped" in yards and public areas, mostly in the later. The Poop Fairy Campaign's post on Facebook reached nearly 48,000 people with 236 likes and 317 shares, plus numerous posts decrying the problems in their neighborhoods. Dog wastes hold dangerous bacteria, viruses and parasites. These effects are much more long lasting with canine feces than any other household pet.

<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/featured/duluth-takes-foul-issue-humor-and/whimsy>

Over 25 "No such thing as a Poop Fairy" signs have already been installed around the city and more are on the way.

Next, Cheryl Podtburg, YMCA Aquatic Safety Coordinator, and Jesse Schomberg from MN Sea Grant gave an overview of where Duluth stands on "Waterfront and Beach Safety." Sea Grant's mission is to educate the public on the risks Lake Superior can pose for swimmers, especially rip currents and what to do if trapped in one. Posters along Park Point, in the Maritime Museum and a billboard lit at night along I-35, have been quite successful in educating the public as to these issues. Ocean waves on average come every 10 seconds; on Lake Superior every 3. In 2019, there will be expanded lifeguard hours and Red Flag services.

Next the meeting shifted to two matters coming before the commissioners for "Action".(1) Vacating a section of Lincoln Park Drive from 6th St down to 3rd, permanently closing this section of the street to all motorized vehicles, in order to enhance and connect the southernmost section of Lincoln Park to the rest of the park. The plan is already well advanced with detailed analyses, and the funding is in place. The City Council approved a mini- master plan in February 16. The newly improved section of Lincoln Park is expected to be operational by the end of the 2020 construction season. The main entrance to this section will be off 25th Avenue West. There will no longer be an entrance from 3rd Street. Once opened this section of Lincoln Park will become the most accessible Park in the city (totally ADA compliant, except for one short strip along one trail). Discussion followed led by Lisa Luokkala, Stewardship Assistant Manager. The Commission voted unanimously to approve.

Finally, (2) the meeting turned its attention to a "Recommendation for Duluth Golf, a plan for the protection and use of Green Space." Jim Filby-Williams, Director of Public Administration, presented the city's request for ACTION. Two years ago the Planning Commission recommended that the entire Lester Park Golf Course be sold to private ownership for development. Parks and Recreation Commissioners and the golfing community raised numerous concerns with this proposal to sell parkland and to eliminate Lester Park Golf entirely. Friends of Duluth Public Golf arose in response and is now a 501(c)3, non-profit entity. The City, working with the Friends and other stakeholders, has abandoned selling the entire Lester Park parcel and now proposes (1) to place 50 acres into private hands with the goal of addressing some of Duluth's critical housing needs; (2) offer a firm commitment to 250 acres of the existing Lester Park Golf Course; (3) acquire 450 acres of tax- forfeit property adjacent to the Park. Not

including the tax-forfeit property, this proposal retains 81 percent of the existing golf course, while selling only the Lake 9 holes. The remaining 18 holes at Lester are to be repaired and upgraded. Although most of the discussion centered on the Lester Golf Course, Enger Golf Course was mentioned. There the plan is to reconfigure 16 acres of the driving range to improve Skyline Drive and to provide 10 acres for multi-family housing.

Filby-Williams made it clear to the commissioners and the citizenry in attendance that he was requesting a vote of support for moving forward with planning, specifically he was requesting approval to develop and submit a RFP, Request for Proposal. He also pointed out that legally the City did not have to seek the advice of the Parks and Recreation Commission (P&R), only Planning and the Council, but that it was doing so because of the role of P&R in coordinating citizen involvement to date. If approved as a recommendation to proceed to the next step, the city hoped to return to P&R in July or August of this year with a detailed proposal with time and cost estimates. Commissioner Isernhagen concluded the discussion among the commissioners urging that the city should conduct a full master plan and explore both properties in question for fuller recreational use, especially during our inclement weather months. In the public comment period, several citizens expressed concern that any parkland be sold for any reason. The Commission voted 6 to 2 in favor of approval to move forward; Commissioners Breeuwer and Edmondson voted in dissent. Clearly, discussion will continue.

Submitted by Tom Burns, Lane Palmer, and Ron Regal

Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting of March 13, 2019

This meeting was full of topics, presentations, and public comment. Agenda item presentations on the Zoo Master Plan Schedule Update and the Dog Education Campaign were delayed until later dates. Gini Breidenbach of the Minnesota Land Trust presented on Nominating the St. Louis River Corridor to the Duluth Natural Area Program. Extensive information on natural attributes of the affected area included for example many birds species as determined by contracted bird sampling. The 3/7/2019 draft is at <http://duluthmn.gov/media/548425/final-draft-version-for-comission-dwp-trail-technical-use-and-standard.pdf> .

Jim Shoberg presented the DWP Trail System Technical Standards & Trail Use Recommendations. The presentation and handout were extensive, covering multiple use issues combining hiking, mountain biking, snowmobile use and equestrian use. The report includes many regulations such as speed limits and picking up horse manure for which the enforcement will be self-regulation. More information is contained in the February 2019 draft at [http://www.duluthmn.gov/media/548509/slrna nomination only draft 3-7-2019.pdf](http://www.duluthmn.gov/media/548509/slrna_nomination_only_draft_3-7-2019.pdf) .

Public comment was heard on the Findings of the Golf Citizen Advisory Committee which had also been presented at the City Council Committee of the Whole Meeting on Monday, March 11th. This presentation can be viewed at <http://www.duluthmn.gov/media/548524/march-11-committee-of-the-whole-final.pdf> . The entire document can be seen at <http://www.duluthmn.gov/media/548523/golf-study-citizen-advisory-committee-findings-final.pdf> . Sparring and questions from commissioners to Jim Williams preceded tonight's comment period. The public comments were spirited with a common theme of asking for preservation of green space. Discussion centered in large part on a proposal the city is entertaining to sell part of Lester Golf Course to a private developer. After the public comments Jim Williams said in answer to a commissioner's question that, although not required, the Parks Commission will be asked to weigh in concerning any sale of park property and the future plan for golf courses. There would be multiple steps to approve implementation of any proposed plan.

Submitted by Ron Regal, Lane Palmer, Thomas Burns

Duluth Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting, February 13, 2019

The Commission discussed the newly-created Duluth Natural Resources Commission and its potential impact on city parkland. This Commission takes the place of, and expands the duties of, the former Urban Forest Commission. The basic mission of the new Commission is to provide science-based guidance to protect the ecological health of city-owned and city-managed lands, e.g. the park system. Concrete examples of Commission involvement will be a strategy for dealing with the Emerald Ash Borer problem and advice and support for Natural Area programs in Hartley Park and the St Louis River area.

A recent City Council rejection of a Parks Commission recommended action led to a proposed protocol on communication from the commission to the Council, prior to Council action.

The protocol is designed to provide a fuller explanation of the reasoning behind Parks Commission actions, including more detail on input from individual commission members. The Parks Commission voted unanimously to adopt the protocol for future recommendations sent to the City Council.

Staff presented a draft of the DWP Trail Technical Use and Standards Plan. The DWP Trail consists of an abandon rail bed located parallel to and uphill from the Munger Trail. The scenic trail goes from the base of Spirit Mountain southwest for six miles to a point along Becks Road, and includes numerous rock cuts and a 500 foot tunnel. The city acquired the land in the 1980's, and it has been used on an informal basis by a variety of human-powered and motorized groups. As a part of formalizing the trail within the city park system, the Technical Use and Standards plan will dictate the construction and maintenance standards as well as the permitted uses, e.g., hiking, biking, horse riding, and snowmobiles (on limited sections). Public comments at the meeting were very positive about the development of the trail, with some divergence of opinion on permitted uses and where they should be limited, suggestions on signage and development of more access points. There will be a two-week public comment period, with Commission action at their March meeting, then subsequent City Council action. The draft plan can be accessed at: [DWP Trail Technical Use and Standards Draft Plan \(public comment period: 2/14/19 - 2/28/19\)](#).

Finally, the Commission learned of City plans to improve beach safety. Signage and media announcements for dangerous water conditions will be improved, along with closer coordination among the police & fire departments, first responders, etc. Public comments included suggestions for lifeguards at more of the public beach sites and a higher level of training for rescues in dangerous water conditions.

Submitted by Lane Palmer

Parks and Recreation Commission, January 9, 2019

Amanda Crosby, the vice-president, called the meeting to order and the minutes of the November meeting were approved. There were no items on the agenda that required a formal vote of the commission, but the various members of the Parks and Recreation Department briefed the commissioners and the citizens in attendance on several programmatic developments.

1. Lisa Luokkala, interim assistant manager, introduced Matt Andrews, the new Trails Coordinator. Matt has a wide range of interest and experience in a great many outdoor activities. He looks forward to working with volunteers and clubs to enhance the community parks.
2. Lisa and Kraig Decker then outlined a pilot program for Kayak/Canoe Rack Rental. The idea is to create an appropriate and seasonal outdoor/on-site storage opportunity for individuals wishing to leave their watercraft on city property at parks along Lake Superior and the Saint Louis River at Park Point, Chambers Grove, and Brighton Beach, with one more to go into service at Spirit Landing, which is scheduled to open in 2020. Rental fees for Duluth residents will be \$100 per season; non-residents will be \$175. Each rack will accommodate up to 6 watercraft. Registration will be done on-line only and through the Parks and Rec website, and will be on a first come/ first served basis. Use is at the user's risk as to theft, damage, and liability. The racks are a gift from the iron workers.
3. Kraig then moved on to explain the new Commercial Use Permit program for city parks. This is a collaborative effort with parks partners, such as businesses regularly operating programs in the parks. These might include, for example, fitness classes, guiding, youth camps, etc. The primary reason for this program is to be sure that commercial (for-profit) operators do not thereby reduce the opportunities for the citizens to use their parks or to detour "open access" to them. The start date was January 1, 2019 with annual and monthly permits available for both resident and non-resident businesses. Applications are linked to the department's website.
4. Finally, Lisa announced that two applications supported by the department had received very substantial Legacy Grant Awards: (1) the DWP rail (along the line of the former Duluth Winnipeg-Pacific Railroad) along with the Duluth Traverse rail received \$900,000; and (2) Hartley Park/Hartley Nature Center had received an award of \$1,300,000, primarily to aid in the expansion and renovation of the Center, but also to enhance overflow parking and way-finding signage in the park. There followed an open discussion of public safety and appropriate levels of lifeguard training. New officers were nominated and elected. Amanda Crosby was elected the new president of the commission. The next commission meeting will be on Wednesday, February 13.

Submitted by Thomas Burns