



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes March 11, 2026
Duluth City Hall, Council Chambers



I. Call Meeting to Order

President Demmer called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Present: David Demmer, Kala Pedersen, Beth Olson, Josie LaPorte, Terrance Lovejoy, Brooke Marinar, Connie Cummins, Tim Meyer, Hailey Sigafus, Jordon Johnson – City Council Liaison

Not Present: Sarah Beehler, Dave Cizmas, Ashley Grimm – St. Louis County Board Liaison, Henry Banks – School Board Liaison

III. Approval of the January 14 Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Meyer motioned to approve the January 14 meeting minutes. Commissioner Marinar second. Unanimously approved. Motion carries.

IV. Presentations

A. Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Designated Natural Area 50% Management Plan (Informational) Tim Beaster, South St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District

Demmer questioned if the parcels in this area that are not formally designated as park land are protected from sale and development. Beaster stated that once those parcels are inducted into the natural area, any sale or development of those parcels would require a supermajority Council vote.

Demmer questioned if any trail corridors were identified that are degrading and could use improvements. Beaster stated that the impacts to the trails and management actions associated with trails is the primary area of the plan that needs more beefing up. Stated that he does not know if a trail impact assessment has been completed, but that could be a good action to include.

Olson questioned if beaver impacts and other wildlife have been taken into consideration. Beaster stated that information on wildlife other than birds and fish are lacking in the plan. Stated that if something is not included in the initial plan, it can always be added as an amendment to the plan later. Stated that the current improvements will have ancillary benefits to other wildlife.

Olson questioned if roadway usage is included in the plan. Beaster stated that it is not addressed specifically but it is understood that the plan will not have major implications for existing public infrastructure such as roads.

Demmer questioned if there has been any consideration for the potential land use changes coming to lands adjacent to this area. Meyer stated that this is an opportunity to work with the development while keeping conservation in mind. Cummins stated that the Lester land use study should include parts of this plan.

Cummins stated that visitor use monitoring to track economic value and locations of human impact could be helpful.

Lovejoy questioned if beaver dams outside the natural area have impacts on the natural area within the boundary. Beaster stated that it is a very nuanced issue and that specific reach of stream would need to be assessed to determine whether there are impacts.



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Lovejoy questioned if citizens should report impacts to streams noticed in this area. Beaster stated that this is always welcome.

Regarding invasive species, Lovejoy questioned if there is assistance provided for property owners adjacent to the natural area. Beaster said there is the potential to work with organizations for funding. Stated that landowners should contact the Soil and Water Conservation District to document the presence of invasive species. Stated that there are potential funding restrictions for private property.

Marinan questioned if there are specific plans for accessible trails at Hawk Ridge. Janelle Long (Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory) stated that there is a plan for an accessible trail loop, which will be worked on this spring and summer. Stated that they are working on finalizing funding for an accessible restroom facility.

LaPorte questioned if there have been conversations with the Indigenous communities or if they are planned for the future. Kubiak stated that there have not been conversations specific to this plan. Stated that there are conversations ongoing to develop a prescribed fire program, and Indigenous communities will be involved.

B. Park Point Recreation Area Draft Plan (For Future Action) Heidi Bringman, LHB

Meyer questioned how much data they collected on current park amenity use. Bringman stated that they collected rental numbers and estimated park usage numbers from lifeguards, as well as large scale event numbers. Stated that they were tasked to size the plan for day-to-day use.

Meyer questioned what plant materials will be included in the natural area. Bringman stated that there will be wetland species for the most part, enhancing what is already there.

Demmer questioned if there was consideration for wetland restoration for the natural area. Bringman stated that this could be a part of final design conversations.

LaPorte questioned if there is a high-level list of funding sources for this project. Bringman stated that some potential funding sources include State Aid, Army Corps of Engineers, Legacy funds, among others. Bennett stated that the funding package will be complex and the strategy will be to find funding for each infrastructure type. Stated that some other examples are Outdoor Recreation grant, Places to Play, ORLP, DNR funds, federal grants, coastal program grants. Stated that the challenge will be to match the timeline of funding with the timeline of improvements.

Demmer questioned if this project will increase maintenance costs for this area. Bringman stated that the hope for this plan is that maintenance will be reduced. Stated that an assessment of current maintenance costs could be helpful ahead of final design. Knettel stated that the City has a large deferred maintenance burden now. Stated that resetting the park will remove the immediate deferred maintenance for this site. Bennett stated that Park Maintenance staff was very involved in the planning process. Stated that in this plan, community areas that require mowing and trash services have been consolidated to reduce maintenance spread out across the park space.

Demmer questioned if key partnerships are involved in the plan. Bennett stated that partners have been involved in the planning process and will continue to review and provide feedback.

Meyer questioned if there is a plan for parking expansion in case the park gets overwhelmed with use. Bringman stated that expansion was a consideration in the plan process. Stated that this plan is a framework for making future decisions. Stated that if improvements are not made now, further down the



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road there will be even more deferred maintenance. Bennett stated that some of the expansion pieces come with revenue that could pay for themselves.

Councilor Johnson questioned if there has been conversation on accessibility to the water. Staff stated that there is an ADA accessible paddle launch but there are challenges for its use due to low water depth.

Councilor Johnson questioned if there have been conversations with the tribes on partnership opportunities. Bringman stated that one of the focus groups was tribal representation. Stated that the plan is easily adaptable to more of that.

V. Commission Committees

Administrative (E-Board) meeting date: Thursday, April 2 at noon, Parks Conference Room - David Demmer, Kala Pedersen, Josie LaPorte [Jessica Peterson, Bridget Erickson]

VI. Commissioner & Liaison Reports

Demmer made some comments on the Lester Park Golf Course land use study and steering committee, referencing the latest staff memo summarizing recent community engagement.

VII. New Business

A. E-Board Nominations and Election at April Meeting (For Future Action)

VIII. Old Business

IX. Division Report

Knettel highlighted the Cold Front event and Hillside Sport Court bid opening.

X. Public Comment

XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:38 pm.

XII. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 8 at 5:00 p.m., Conference Room 330.