

# Minutes

## Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission



**Meeting date:** December 4, 2025

**Time:** 4:00 PM

**Location:** 390 Robert Street North

### Members present:

- ☒ Chair, Tony Yarusso, at large
- ☐ Monica Dillenburg, District A
- ☐ Vacant, District B

- ☐ Tess Bouska, District C
- ☒ David Yakes, District D
- ☒ Chris Suerig, District E
- ☐ Cecily Harris, District F

- ☒ Anthony Taylor, District G
- ☐ Amanda Duerr, District H
- ☒ Wendy Wulff, Council Liaison
- ☐ = present, E = excused

### Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Metropolitan Council acknowledges that the land we currently call Minnesota and specifically the seven-county region is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota Oyate who are present and active contributors to our thriving region. As part of the Metropolitan Council's commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism and the fact that government institutions, including the Metropolitan Council, benefitted economically, politically, and institutionally after the forceable removal of the Dakota Oyate, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to instilling Land, Water, and People Commitments in regional policy. These commitments support the Dakota Oyate, the eleven federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota, Ho-Chunk Nation, and the American Indian Communities representing over 150 diverse Tribal Nations that call the seven-county region home.

### Call to order

With a quorum being present, Committee Chair Yarusso called the regular meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission to order at 4:03 p.m.

### Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

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

### Agenda approved

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

### Approval of minutes

It was moved by Yakes, seconded by Chair Yarusso to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2025, meeting of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission. **Motion carried.**

### Public invitation

Jonathan Vlaming, Three Rivers Park District announced his retirement and shared his thoughts and outgoing comments.

First, he encouraged the Metropolitan Council and regional park implementing agencies to buy as much land as we are able, to meet the growing needs of our region.

Second, he stated metro areas across the nation are competing against one another for talent. We need to capitalize on winter as an opportunity. Work with partners like Greater MSP and Explore

Minnesota. He stated that parks and trails are about quality of life.

Third, he discussed the importance of open space, even if it doesn't have recreational opportunities now. He stressed the importance of preserving open space while we can. Weave together an ecological network to keep our region resilient.

Finally, he thanked all the commission members and staff for all their work over the years.

### Information Item

**Parks Ambassador and Art + Policy Program Updates** (Thony Thao, Ellie Hohulin, Erika Hermann)

Thao gave a presentation on the Parks Ambassador and Art and Policy Programs as outlined in the materials provided.

Suerig asked what types of projects are planned. Thao gave an example of Ramsey County working with HipHop artists who did a program on drowning that was about safety in water but also drowning in thoughts and emotions.

Mulin noted that the Minnesota Parks Artist in Residence Program is sponsoring a Pilot Project culminating event that will be held next Tuesday, December 9, and noted that an email with details was sent to the Commissioners.

**Parks Equity Tool Refresh** (Ismael Ramirez and Magdelyn Herzig)

Ramires and Herzig gave a presentation on the updated Parks Equity Tool as outlined in the materials provided.

Yakes asked what value would implementing agencies find in the tool. How would they use it? Ramirez stated this tool is something that agency planners and outreach staff use to understand where their prioritized populations are in their park and trail service areas. The Council is interested in better understanding how the implementing agencies will use the tool. It's assumed that each agency would use the tool differently – some for outreach and others for planning.

Mullin discussed the evolution of the equity work over the past 10 years and how it has evolved to help people better understand what opportunities are available to them. The development of this tool will help with this process.

**MPOSC: Looking back on 2025 and Celebrating** (Kevin Phan and Emmett Mullin)

Phan and Mullin gave a presentation looking back on 2025 and the work of MPOSC as shown in the presentation provided.

The Commission enjoyed cake and reflected on the past year's accomplishments.

### Reports

1. Chair – Chair Yarusso questioned the January 1, 2026, meeting due to the holiday. Mullin noted that the plan is to cancel the January MPOSC Meeting.
2. Committee Members – None.
3. Council Liaison – Wulff noted that Community Development Committee approved the updated language for the Gale Woods Farms Special Feature land acquisition, and she stated that this committee report would go to the full Council on 12/17/2025.
4. Staff – Mullin reiterated that the MN Parks and Arts and Residence Showcase will be on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, and noted there was a link in the email sent out to participate virtually. It will be from noon - 1:30 pm.

Mullin reported that two minor amendments were passed administratively in 2025. They were the Rush Creek Regional Trail Long Range Plan Amendment and Gail Wood Farm minor boundary adjustment.

Mullin reported that Robin Hutchinson is the Metropolitan Council's new Chair and stated that she started on December 1, 2025.

### **Adjournment**

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 5:24p.m.

### **Certification**

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission meeting of December 4, 2025.

Approved this 5th day of February 2025.

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