

MOSCOW PATHWAYS COMMISSION



Tanya Denison
Commission Chair
mpc@ci.moscow.id.us

Regular Meeting
~Minutes~

David Schott
Staff Liaison
208-883-7098

<https://www.ci.moscow.id.us/454/Moscow-Pathways-Commission>

Tuesday
February 11, 2025

5:00 PM

Mayors Conference Room
206 E. 3rd St.

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 PM

PRESENT: Tanya Denison; Chair, Robert Heckendorn; Vice-Chair (arrived 5:20 pm), Becky Chastain; Secretary, Erin Bacon, Judy Brown, Margaret Dibble, Jim Petersen
STAFF: David Schott; Parks and Facilities Manager, Tyler Palmer; Public Works Director, Deputy City Administrator

VISITORS: None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Approval of Pathways Commission September 10, 2024 Minutes (ACTION ITEM) – Tanya Denison

Presentation of minutes for approval.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Approve minutes as presented; approve minutes with amendments; or provide staff further direction.

Dibble moved to approve the minutes as presented. Brown seconded. Roll Call Vote: Ayes-Unanimous. Motion carried.

2. Public Comment and Response to Previous Comments (limited to 15 minutes)

Members of the public may speak to the Commission regarding matters NOT on the agenda or currently pending before the Commission. Please state your name and city of residence for the record and limit your remarks to three (3) minutes.

None

3. Consideration of the Moscow Pathways Commission Dissolution (ACTION ITEM) – David Schott / Tyler Palmer

Over the past several months, the Moscow Pathways Commission has encountered challenges in identifying meaningful topics for discussion during our regularly scheduled meetings. With no major pathway improvement projects on the horizon, there has been a notable lack of substantive discussions specific to our commission's focus.

Despite this, the Moscow Pathways Commission has made efforts to engage the public through events such as the Annual Bike Tour, Annual Pedestrian Tour, and Bike to Work Day. Unfortunately, attendance at these events has been low, both from the public and commission members.

Should relevant topics arise where the expertise of the Pathways Commission might prove valuable, we encourage the Parks and Recreation Commission and/or the Transportation Commission to form a project-specific task force.

Schott: The commission has struggled with relevant topics. Many past topics align more with the Transportation Commission.

In reviewing agendas from the past three years there were only 4 topics that were outside of housekeeping, budget, elections and scheduling outreach events. Some fell under the Parks & Recreation Commission like the Parkland Dedication, Harvest Hills and 14 of the last 30 meetings were cancelled, which is nearly 40%, for lack of quorum or lack of relevant topics. Schott's recommendation is dissolution of the Moscow Pathways Committee.

Palmer: Values and appreciates the investment of our citizens in the City and City Government.

With funding being cut at the State level, there is a consistent decline that has escalated. The City has had to be very, very frugal with our resources and staff time. It has resulted this past year in the reduction of staff of the Administrative Assistant in the Parks Department who supported David, 2 police officers and a position in Engineering. We have to focus on what we can support and what we have the staff bandwidth for and honor the Commissions time and recognition of the reality with staffing this was an opportunity to take a look at efficiencies and where we can trim back with the significant overlap with the Parks and Recreation and Transportation Commissions.

Looking at history, in 2013, there was an extensive conversation about the dissolution of the Paradise Path task force. There were some projects like the underpass on the highway coming up, which was a big connection piece that they really wanted to work through. At that point, they were also having troubles coming up with agenda items, lack of quorum and affiliation with the Transportation and Parks and Recreation Commission. Our pathway system is an incredible asset to the community, and he congratulates the commission on that.

Palmer supports the recommendation that is coming forward here. It is not a retreat from the importance of pathways, it is in honor of the time of volunteers and also in recognition of the reality of some of the staff time constraints that we are butting up against. He fully anticipates and intends to have conversations with the Transportation Commission, which are all highly committed to this. But as we do in the future come up against things that need to have a specific pathway consideration we will encourage both the Transportation and Parks and Recreation Commissions, depending on if it is a recreation purpose or a transportation purpose, to form a work group to specifically look at the pathways to make sure they are getting the attention they deserve.

Discussion with the Pathways Commission members:

Denison asked if the decision to approve the dissolution, does that mean this is in the hands of the commission because it sounds like the City is saying that it does not have the resources for supporting this.

Palmer replied that the position of the commission is as an advisory to the City Council and the commission is created as a creature of the City Code. The ultimate decision is a City Council decision. Any sort of code amendment requires a City Council decision. The action of the commission would be to make a recommendation to the City Council. We have some draft language for a letter that can potentially be used, or altered by, the commission. The usual procedure is to make a recommendation to City Council and then the council takes what is deemed the appropriate action.

Petersen has significant concerns given bike lanes are not part of the purview. He sees bike lane linkages between facilities significant to a Pathway Commission discussion. He sees a lot of opportunity for significant items dropped from the commission for consideration and action and is not sure where the breakdown happened. An example is the pathway around the ballfield. Work was started and the commission did not get an opportunity to weigh in if it was the highest priority path to be modified. Heron's Hideout Park should have been brought to the committee and considered other activities as well. He has also seen bike paths around the city, and they are not linking them like they used to. Are concerns being addressed in a number of issues. City staff wasn't interested in their feedback. He would like the way that it is stated that no significant items were brought to the commission.

Bacon stated that the path around the ballfields was discussed for a long time because of the roots pushing up in the path. The funds that were used for that were earmarked a long time ago. Heron's Hideout Park she can't really remember. She has been on the Pathways Commission since January 2017 and joined the Transportation Commission because she saw a breakdown in communication and wanted to address that and advocated for many years that gap be filled by some mechanism that is not her being on both commissions and that has not been rectified. Bike lanes are not in the purview of the Pathways Commission, and she supported the reason for taking those bike lanes out.

Schott explained the commissions don't dictate operations but can have an influence. The Carol Brink pathway and Heron's Hideout pathway projects were operational maintenance and repairs to existing pathways for public safety. In both cases, staff did hear from the Pathways Commission and public about the condition of the pathways.

Palmer agreed and explained that commissions do not make recommendations about the City's capital budget maintenance information for regular maintenance. All of the significant tasks, Moscow on the Move Master Plan adopted in 2016 and the underpass have been completed, and all of the major provisions have been implemented.

Petersen stated the path around the ballfield but what about recommendations about other paths? The idea is to give recommendations and thoughts.

Denison stated that the City may be overlooking a very valuable resource of very invested people as they joined a long time ago. She strongly recommends they be reassigned to the Parks and Recreation and Transportation Commissions. But there are no open seats on those commissions for faithful and dedicated people that have shown up for years and years and years. She encourages the City to look at places they can still be effective, be on the

team they love so much, that they can still advocate and advise given their historical knowledge and skill and ability.

Palmer agreed that engagement is what makes Moscow what it is. But ultimately the Mayor makes the decision. The staff can make any recommendation, but the number of commissioners is set by code. There would be staff support for everyone on the commission who wants to participate on the Transportation or Parks and Recreation commission.

Denison asked for clarification regarding what their obligation is to the working group idea. What is the other obligation of the commissions to pull them in?

Palmer agreed that the language was “squishy”. Ultimately the decision was in the hands of the chair of the commission so he cannot say yes under certain circumstances of who they would choose. They can choose whoever they want. It is the chair’s decision. Staff and the Mayor can make recommendations.

Schott says they do look for people who are knowledgeable and passionate about a subject and it was amazing. He can work with the Parks & Recreation and Transportation Commissions to reach out on projects that need expert input. Palmer added formal outreach on current projects are not at that point yet.

Bacon feels the City of Moscow, Tyler and his team, do a really good job evaluating and anticipating where growth is happening and where problems may occur. She has a lot of faith in the City to continue that work. She waited 2 years for an open spot on the Transportation Commission and the only reason she got on there was because a member emailed her and told her they were resigning and “get her letter in today so she is first in line.” There are only a limited number of positions on these Commissions so it is harder to get on them. You’re asking a group of people that are ready, willing and wanting to work to wait. This group has wanted to be more of an advocate but there was no one to take it back to the other commissions. There was not a procedure to do that and now it will be less so. Safety issues for example, they did not have a way to make recommendations because that was not in the charter. We were there to advise and promote but not to develop and design. But there was a monthly time to talk about items like that. In a working group there was not time to generate an idea or bring up something they heard from the public and be asked to provide our expertise.

While first visiting the commission, Petersen brought up the process of the commission making a recommendation of a potential path being accepted or moving it somewhere else. He thought that this actually gave this commission the authority to sending substantive issues to the Mayor. And this is why he looked at it and said why weren’t they consulted about Heron’s Hideout Park and advocate for safe crossings. He objects to the way the language is phrased here as there are substantive issues to give feedback on but they are just not being brought to this commission? There is not a pathway to bring concerns forward.

Denison if there are concerns put them on the agenda. That’s what hasn’t happened. The agendas have been maintenance items that David has kept them going on and public outreach events.

Schott said a lot of the items that have come up weather safety or staff liaison, he does bring those forward, he talks to Engineering, all that type of stuff. A lot of this stuff is under the Transportation Commission, Community Development, Parks & Recreation, Pathways. It's the other side of the house for the City and he does forward those. He encouraged Petersen to send his concerns. He takes that seriously.

Dibble asked about the public comment period and wondered if the Transportation Commission got many people participate in that.

Palmer responded that rarely do they have people comment. It really depends on the agenda items. The Sustainable Environment will occasionally have people come in and comment about things they are passionate about. For example the Climate Action Plan had people show up for public comment. Any resident can send an email to a Commission, or staff liaison, and can ask for an agenda item to be added. Then the Chair approves for it to be on the agenda and it will be discussed. That is at the discretion of the Chair. He has never seen someone ask to be on an agenda item to be added rejected. There is no reason to. That is what they are there for, to discuss items that come up.

Dibble stated that one of the things that made the Pathways Commission unique in part was the pathways were meant to be multi-used, not just transportation, (skateboarders, walkers and whatever) and is different from the Transportation or Parks & Recreation Commission issue, and is afraid that is going to go by the wayside.

Palmer stated the Transportation Commission, in code, includes pedestrians and bicycles. That is specifically called out in code, and we have a very robust multi-modal transportation plan that guides that as well. By code we are required to look at that and the Transportation Commission also by code is required to look at that.

Dibble says the Transportation Commission is a huge commission with a whole lot on the table and she doesn't think that they have time to think about issues on paths.

Denison said she can't think of a time that we have discussed the pathways but that's because there has been a dedicated commission that has discussed the pathways. The Transportation Commission should be made aware that this commission has been dissolved and in addition to the other things we are aware of and discussing. Will the Transportation Commission be in charge of the pathways or is it Parks and Recreation?

Palmer replied that it depends on the topic. The Transportation Commission purview already includes the pathways. It's already included in the Transportation Commission charter. If it is more of a recreation focused item, then that will go to Parks & Recreation. If it is transportation, it will go to Transportation Commission, or somewhere in the middle, it will go to both. That is something that is already covered in the Transportation Commissions charter and wouldn't need alteration. Part of the reason in looking at this, in 2013 they were looking at disbanding the Paradise Path Task Force was active for 20 years. That's when the Chipman Trail, and trail system, was being developed. We don't have any other significant pathway extensions or projections.

Petersen and Denison discussed the removal of connecting bike lanes in the F Street, D Street and Mountain View area "to the path". Palmer added that it was reviewed by the Transportation Commission. Denison said this is getting off topic and, in her perspective, Denison said looking at the last few years in what they've been doing here she thinks they

are creating a lot of work for City staff that may not be worth it. In the last few years, they have not had the attendance and public interest that would potentially warrant all of the effort David, and his crew are putting into supporting this commission. If they are going to change what they're doing on the Commission and participation she would reconsider this but there would have to be some serious changes in how they themselves participate with this group. She does not know what the charter is but what it comes down to is what is there that is coming in the future that they think needs to be done and needs that charter versus what is the responsibility of the other commissions and City staff doing their jobs as they could participate as a member of the public.

Denison said Petersen proposed voting on the following:

Given the pressure on the city budget and the charter of the Pathways Commission is largely redundant with those of the Transportation Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Pathways Commission recommends that it be dissolved. Then lose much of the other language in there about disparaging of members of the commission, others.

Dibble said that was a good point. Palmer added that it was well stated and well written.

Denison asked for a second of the motion to continue the discussion, Dibble seconded.

Heckendorn is worried that the Transportation Commission will consist of people who drive cars. He drives a car and appreciates the work they do driving cars, and he likes the stuff in the plan. He also feels they need the voice of people that don't drive cars. There are a bunch of people that are now driving E Bikes which is changing the landscape of transportation, which is a whole other thing. It means there are a bunch of people that get around in a different way. He is not convinced that they will be represented on the transportation part.

Palmer agreed. He rarely drives and gets around on bikes or walking for over a decade. His daughter bike commutes from downtown to NRS and back on the pathway. His experience of 15 years with our Transportation Commission is that is routinely and strongly considered. For a long time, Phil Cook on that commission, was one of the most vocal advocates for multi modal transportation, bike transportation. The limiting factor for what we are discussing here is the importance of multi modal transportation/bike transportation. That is not the purview of this Commission. This commission is pathways. It's truly just pathways and that has been a limiting factor.

Dibble she had to be somewhere at six.

Brown asked to bring up community paths through places the city owns but they're not really a car or asphalt path (social paths). Who would they then talk to about getting signs up on those?

Palmer said it would depend on the infrastructure that was being sought for that. Each would have a role in that, possibly overlapping rolls. Whether it would be paving or adding signs, the Transportation and Parks and Recreation Commissions could both have a hand in it.

Denison address Heckendorn that there is a very diverse group of people on the Transportation Commission that do consider walking and biking and nothing is perfect. Nothing is perfect in life and our transportation system is no exception to that. We do our very best, we pivot when things don't work, we modify, we re-think, we re-work. But there are elements of our transportation system that could be better for sure. There are also elements that could be a whole lot worse. So, we do the best that we can with our skill, knowledge and resources. She can assure that there are a very diverse group of people that are mindful about pedestrian and bike safety on the Transportation Commission. We don't design, we listen, we give feedback. Design is not in our purview. The city designs, we are not engineers.

Denison called for a vote.

Petersen read the following statement:

Given the pressure on the city budget and the charter of the Pathways Commission is largely redundant with those of the Transportation Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Pathways Commission recommends that it be dissolved.

PROPOSED ACTIONS: Approve dissolution of the Moscow Pathways Commission.

(Petersen) moved to approve dissolution of the Moscow Pathways Commission. Dibble seconded. Roll call vote: Ayes-3 (Chastain, Dibble, Petersen), Nays-1 (Heckendorn), Abstain-3 (Denison, Bacon, Brown). Motion Carried

The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 PM

NOTICE: It is the policy of the City of Moscow that all City-sponsored public meetings and events are accessible to all people. If you need assistance in participating in this meeting or event due to a disability under the ADA, please contact the City's ADA Coordinator by phone at (208) 883-7600, TDD (208) 883-7019, or by email at adacoordinator@ci.moscow.id.us at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting or event to request an accommodation. The City of Moscow is committed to ensuring that all reasonable accommodation requests are fulfilled.