

**Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission  
Meeting Minutes for June 24, 2015  
Hermantown Public Works Facility**

**Approved 07/01/15**

**Members Present:** Rita Albrecht; Rick Anderson; Mike Hulett; Tim Kennedy; Al Liefkort; Marc Mattice; Keith Nelson; Tom Ryan; Barry Wendorf; LuAnn Wilcox

**Members Absent:** Bryan Pike; Jannik Anderson; Tom Schmitz

**1. The meeting was called to order by Chair Al Liefkort**

**2. Motion** by Wendorf, second by Hulett: Approve the minutes of April 22, 2015. **Carried\***

**Motion** by R. Anderson, second by Wendorf: Approve the minutes of May 27, 2015. **Carried\***

\*It was noted that the consent agenda was inaccurate; minutes were approved with those corrections.

**3. Treasurer's Report**

An updated budget was not received, so no report was available.

**4. Approval of the Agenda**

The agenda date was incorrectly shown as June 25; the correct date was June 24.

**Motion** by Albrecht, second by Ryan: Approve the agenda as amended. **Carried.**

**5. Acknowledge Guests in Attendance**

Joe Czapiewski, JFC Strategic Services (serving the commission as System Plan Coordinator)  
Jeff and Kathy Schoenbauer, Schoenbauer Consulting  
Steve Plaza, Fergus Falls Parks & Recreation, District 3 DPC member  
Bill Bruins, former District 6 Commissioner, volunteer  
Kurt Wayne, GMRPTC Evaluation Team  
Wayne Sames, GMRPTC Evaluation Team  
Dennis Fink, GMRPTC Evaluation Team  
Michelle Barker, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Midwest Region Director  
Matt Andrews, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Associate Region Director

**6. Unfinished Business**

**6.1 - Special Legislative Session Report**

Copies of the approved Parks and Trails Fund appropriation bill were distributed. GMRPTC was included under the appropriation to the DNR. It included a directive to contract services with Conservation Corps Minnesota. The commission will seek clarification as to whether those services are available to regional parks and trails.

The appropriation to the commission included two legislatively designated projects: a segment of the Mesabi Trail, and a segment of the Wagon Wheel Trail. Members expressed concerns that such projects have not been vetted through the designation criteria and funding processes established by the commission. Although these particular projects are known to be worthy, such designations could potentially be in conflict with the Statewide System Plan under

development, as well as siphoning funds away from higher priority projects. The commission acknowledges that its 2015 report to the legislature provided a list of projects that are *eligible* for funding, but did not include a prioritized list of funding recommendations because this cycle was still being directly administered by the DNR. The bill directs the commission to submit *prioritized funding recommendations* in its January 2016 report, as well as a report detailing regional designation and funding criteria. The intent of the commission is to demonstrate the objectivity and integrity of both the Statewide System Plan and the designation/funding processes.

All projects will be evaluated and scored by the ETeam, including those that are legislatively designated. Once a property or concept has been designated as regionally significant, it becomes part of the Statewide System Plan and is eligible for funding. The formula for determining annual funding priorities was discussed at length under 6.3 in these minutes.

The commission has yet to determine the funding criteria for *Connecting People and the Outdoors*, and how projects under this heading will be integrated into its funding priorities.

## **6.2 - ETeam**

Joe reported that approximately 100 users have signed into the designation application portal and 85 applications have been initiated. He explained that applications submitted in 2014 cannot be resubmitted in the new system and a new application is necessary.

Although a supporting city council or county commission resolution is required to complete designation applications, the application can be submitted as "pending resolution." The ETeam may do a preliminary evaluation of the application, but it cannot move forward without the resolution. A simplified resolution form is available for regional designation, but a more formal, extensive resolution will be required for funding applications. The resolution is an expression of knowledge and consent from the authorized governing body.

A unit *Master Plan* must accompany an application for funding, but will strengthen designation applications. All projects will be ranked (high, medium, low) but cannot be scored without a Master Plan. Members discussed concerns about smaller communities which lack staff and resources to develop master plans and the logistics of funding master plans once a property has received designation. RDCs and recreation associations can provide assistance with planning, coordination, and master plan development. The commission will also be providing more direct consultation and assistance as an Executive Director is hired and the system plan progresses.

Members also discussed how existing parks and trails that are not requesting funding will be included in the Statewide System Plan. The commission will work with the District Planning Committees (DPC) to identify regionally significant parks and trails for inclusion in the system inventory. DPCs will also assist in identifying gaps and opportunities so that funding can be directed to fulfilling the system plan. Developing the Statewide System Plan is a primary objective for the commission.

## **6.3 - Funding Priorities**

Jeff presented a *Funding Priority-setting Worksheet* and led a discussion about how the commission will determine which projects to recommend for funding.

The options presented were:

1. Rank and score projects across the state; fund highest scoring, ready to go.

2. Geographic distribution: fund highest scoring projects in each district.
3. Fund top scoring projects in each of the three classifications.
4. Fund highest impact and/or most innovative projects.

Members agreed to use a combination of all four, with the understanding that as the Statewide System Plan is developed, specific projects will be solicited that fit into the plan. For this funding cycle, the commission will analyze projects according to each priority-setting method, consult with the DPCs, discuss and debate project merits, then exercise its prerogative to subjectivity in determining final funding recommendations. All agreed that projects funded will be of the highest quality, serving the greatest need, and equitably distributed geographically. Concerns were raised about how small capital projects and non-capital projects will be evaluated, which will be topics for continued discussion.

## **7. New Business**

### **7.1 - International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA)**

The representatives from IMBA presented information about the organization, existing facilities, industry trends, etc. and engaged the commission in dialogue about a statewide plan for mountain biking. The commission initiated a meeting with the DNR and Metropolitan Council to coordinate development of the statewide plan. They agreed to catalogue existing facilities, but expressed little interest in developing additional mountain biking within their systems, so expansion will mostly fall to the commission. Preliminarily, they identified 15 State Parks that allow mountain bicycling on multi-use trails, and 85 miles of trails in the Twin Cities metro area, 73 of which are multi-use. Multi-use trails are mostly shared with cross-country skiing and hiking. IMBA also deems snowmobiling, fat tire biking, and pedestrian uses as compatible with mountain biking, in certain circumstances and given design considerations.

IMBA classifies its *Model Trails Programs* into three categories:

- Epic: demanding single track; natural setting; minimum 20 miles.
- Flow Trails: all terrain rollercoaster experience; little braking and pedaling.
- Ride Centers: large scale facilities with a variety of trails for all skill levels.

The commission will appoint a subcommittee to inventory existing mountain bicycling facilities and opportunities, consult with IMBA regarding designation and funding applications, quantify existing and potential ridership, and work with them to draft a statewide plan that will mostly focus on destination "ride centers."

### **7.2 - Data Management System**

Jeff advocated for approval of up to \$50,000 to Houston Engineering to design and produce the funding portal, which will be necessary to process applications beginning in August. Per previous contract approval, the commission requests a proposal for contract extension with a budget breakdown of the work and a description of the work product. The chair authorized Houston Engineering to begin the work with formal approval by the commission at its July meeting, pending receipt of the proposal and the transfer of appropriated funds from the DNR.

**Motion** by Hulett, second by Mattice: Authorize the chair to enter into contract with the DNR for receipt of FY 2016 and FY 2017 appropriations to the commission. **Carried.**

### **7.3 - Executive Director Committee Report**

The commission has approved up to \$150,000 including expenses for a contracted Executive Director and up to two assistants, one of which must be well-versed in Geographic Information Systems. The chair will provide an estimate of anticipated expenses for the Executive Director.

Schoenbauer Consulting received and processed applications and selected four candidates for interviews. Per the Commission Operating Guidelines, the chair appointed Mike, Barry, Keith, Rick, and Bill to serve on the selection committee.

**Motion** by Nelson, second by Mattice: Authorize the selection committee to interview four candidates for the Executive Director position, recommend two finalists for selection by the Chair, and authorize the Chair to negotiate a contract to be ratified by the commission at its July meeting. **Carried.**

## 8. Items from Members

**Motion** by Ryan, second by Wendorf: Extend the contract with JFC Strategic Services at \$5,000 per month through September 30. **Carried.**

Al noted receipt of letters from La Crescent (regarding the Wagon Wheel Trail), Mesabi Trail, and the St. Louis County Human Resources Director.

A draft outline of the proposal and criteria for *Connecting People and the Outdoors* will be presented at the July meeting for discussion by the commission. The full proposal will be presented at the August meetings of the commission and the Legacy Advisory Committee.

## 9. Consent Agenda

Rita reviewed the bills and claims as follows:

- JFC Strategic Services	4,351.00
- Commissioners expenses	3,255.74
- Doherty Staffing - Clerical	201.55
- Amazon Web Services	141.41
- DPC 6 - Tim Madigan	31.62
- City of Bemidji	4,879.11
- Houston Engineering	2,594.00
- Schoenbauer Consulting	906.30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,360.73</b>

**Motion** by Nelson, second by Wendorf: Approve the consent agenda as submitted. **Carried.**

**The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for July 22, 2015.**

**Motion** to adjourn was made by Anderson, second by Kennedy. **Motion carried.**

\*All motions are carried unanimously unless otherwise noted. Motions which are not unanimous are recorded in the Vote Tally Journal.