

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission
Minutes for September 28, 2016
Sartell City Hall, Sartell, MN
APPROVED

Commissioners in Attendance: Mike Hulett, Peg Furshong, Rita Albrecht, Tim Kennedy, Tom Schmitz, Rick Anderson, Tom Ryan, Marc Mattice, Keith Nelson, Barry Wendorf, Bryan Pike, LuAnn Wilcox, Jannik Anderson

Staff and Consultants Present: Renee Mattson, Executive Director, Joe Czapiewski, System Plan Coordinator, Jeff and Kathy Schoenbauer, Schoenbauer Consulting

1. Meeting called to order at 10:02am by Chair Hulett

2. Approval of August 24, 2016 Minutes:

Commissioner Kennedy asked for corrections to the minutes with regard to Michelle Barker's title which was noted as Executive Director but should be Midwest Region Director and Matt Andrews should be noted as Associate Region Director, MORC.

Motion by Schmitz

Second by Kennedy

Motion Approved

3. Treasurer's Report:

Month two of 12-month cycle was reported on. Nothing unusual for the month. Total expenses of \$23,069.15. We are at 86% of the budget for the year.

Motion by R. Anderson

Second by Mattice

Motion Approved

4. Approval of Agenda:

Chair Hulett suggested a change on the agenda to move the Presentation by Dan Larson from New Business, 9.1 to immediately after the Acknowledgement of Members of the Public, agenda item 5.

Motion by Schmitz

Second by Pike

Motion Approved

5. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance:

Mary Koep from Brainerd and Jim Bobier from McLoed County a Township resident. Mrs. Koep asked questions of the Commission and it was suggested that all questions posed to the Commission be put in writing so there is no miscommunication and responses will be written as well.

Motion by Nelson to submit all questions to the Commission formally in writing and all responses to the questions be in writing as well. The Executive Director will respond on behalf of the Commission.

Second by Ryan

Motion Approved

9. New Business:

9.1 Presentation by Dan Larson of the Border to Border Off-Road Vehicle Trail

The Border2Border trail is an extensive trail system from North Dakota to Lake Superior. Larson commended the Commission on the first round of grants awarded and the facilities designated to date. As well as the work being done to build a new system in Greater Minnesota.

The Minnesota Four-Wheel Drive Association is building great new partnerships to create regionally significant trail-riding opportunities for the growing interest in 4-by-4 jeep and truck activities across the state. The focus is in the Northern area of the state, but the largest membership is in the metro area and the potential for significant economic impact is great.

Any highway licensed vehicle can use this trail and the objective is not to travel great distances, but to traverse extremely difficult terrain with obstacles the jeeps and other vehicles can maneuver over and around. The DNR is a partner in this plan and the group will seek approval from Local Government Units along the route.

It's been a long process to find trail alignment and work with LGU to find the best routes, they (LGU) are instrumental in working through this process and ultimately find the support to be successful building this trail system.

The group hopes to apply for Designation in next year's round of applications. Discussion of how this trail and the planning for such, as well as the Commission's place in the process was discussed thoroughly.

9.2 Designation scoring by ETeam of additional projects

Joe Czapiewski introduced the four applications for designation that were scored by the ETeam. Those four facilities:

15-059D Mesabi Trail D1– mixed use trail, primarily non-motorized, but no snowmobile use other than a small, 10-mile or less portion, and only after there is a foot of snow on the trail. They scored 433.75 points. They did update the Master Plan as requested. The plan is 20-years old but there is some data management necessary, but they met our request to update the plan to meet our requirements. The trail does have a user fee for the trail which does raise a significant amount of money for maintenance. But there is not a hard monitoring process in place.

15-096D Barn Bluff Park D6 – special recreational feature. It is a unique park, well established. Scored 392.5. ETeam felt the views were superior to anything else on the Mississippi. It does provide a good connection to the Cannon Valley Trail.

16-014D Robbins Island Park D3 – natural resource based park. Scored 393.75. This was their second attempt to achieve designation. It is unique as it is multiple properties, but connected. This is one of the strategic initiatives in the system plan, to look at parks in this region as there is not much available.

15-031D Prospector Loop Trail D1 – mixed use trail, primarily motorized, ultimately a 250-mile trail system connecting several communities in that area as well as State Parks and State Trails. Scored 422.5. The ETeam recognizes the Master Plan qualifies but there are some gaps. There is a lack of formal agreement for development and operations. The implementation plan is a bit under developed. It is a high quality project, but we need to spend some time working with them before designation happens. The designation application is for the entire route. More than half the trail is in St. Louis County.

Jeff Schoenbauer raised concerns about the designations due to uncertainties in the applications. He also felt more emphasis needs to be placed on the counting and use levels. Too much anecdotal information, not enough hard numbers. He feels approval should not happen until the consultant team comes back with hard recommendations.

The Chair inquired as to the thoughts of the consultants the Executive Director. Mattson recommended approval of all the applicants. Czapiewski recommended approval of the first three, while the Prospector Loop should be worked with to develop more information. Jeff recommended waiting on all four until more vetting has been done.

The Commission discussed the applicants and the procedural process and a way to vet recommendations by the team.

There was a feeling that more of a recommendation should come from the consultants and the Executive Director in written format prior to the meeting.

Motion by Nelson: that the Commission approve for designation all four projects conditional to meeting qualifiers, *if there are any*, as established by the Executive Director and consulting team for the projects. If there are no qualifiers after discussion among the Executive Director and consulting team, then there is no further action needed by the applicants. If there are qualifiers on a project, then designation will be delayed until those qualifiers are met.

Second by Kennedy

Motion Approved on a vote of 8 aye to 5 nay

The above motion was subsequent to lengthy discussion about how to best move forward with designating the four projects before the Commission. From this point forward consultant and Executive Directors comments on the applications for designation will be included with the recommendations to the Commission for approval.

6. Executive Director's Report:

The mid-month report was sent out two weeks prior. The only other items are the work to improve the DMS site. There are ongoing issues with the site that have been discussed at length in previous meetings. We have a recommendation to use a consultant who works in this field and can help the Commission navigate the issues we've experienced; that is Vistal Partners and Erin Carlson. It seems the best way to move forward is with the help of a technical architect who will work with us to either correct the issues with Houston Engineering or move the work product to another source. And it appears the most realistic path is moving away from Houston and creating the DMS site that can best serve our constituents.

The cost is estimated to be in the neighborhood of a contract not to exceed \$50,000 for the work. We will need to arrange for payments to be made to Vistal Partners in a weekly timeframe. Currently the Executive Director carries Commission expenses on her personal credit card and is reimbursed monthly. But this expense will be greater than she is comfortable carrying and arrangements will need to be made with the City of Bemidji who is our fiscal agent to make payments more frequently than every 30+ days.

Motion by Nelson to place the contract for Vistal partners on the agenda as an Action Item under New Business 9.7.

Second by Pike

Motion Approved

Motion by Nelson to have the Executive Director bring a contract to the Commission for approval at the October meeting.

Second by Pike

Motion Approved

The Legacy Advisory Committee Liaisons have been meeting regularly in person as we move into the upcoming legislative session. The coordinating among partners funding request will be in 1% of the total legacy funding available. The work on the partner's website is in fact moving forward and a project manager has been hired and the goal is to launch the website by spring.

The Executive Director will be attending several meetings in October with interested organizations who wish for updates on the Commissions work.

The Alexander Ramsey Park in Redwood Falls trail project that received a grant from the Commission has run into issues with the cost of the project being greater than anticipated, but the city is committed to paying the additional costs to finish the project. We were made aware of this by the DNR.

6.1 Report of Executive Committee Meeting on September 27, 2016

Chair Hulett reported on the meeting. The discussion focused on the looking forward on roles and responsibilities of the Executive Director, Consultants and the Commission going forward.

7. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission:

Commissioner Albrecht inquired about granting moving forward and whether the DNR will continue to administer the grants for 2.5%. Also, regarding a previous question of whether water quality is addressed in our criteria? Governor Dayton has declared the year of clean water. It is not, but it is addressed in the Master Plan. Commissioner Mattice added that the DNR does require supplemental information of the grantee in an entire environmental section on water quality, air quality, etc.

Commissioner Furshong will be attending Redwood Falls Master Planning meeting. Redwood Falls and Renville counties. They have hired a consultant from Colorado to do the planning.

Commissioner Ryan mentioned Timothy Engrave wrote a book, "County Parks in Minnesota", it's an informative read and he highly suggests it.

Chair Hulett has tried to monitor the Legacy Advisory Liaisons meetings via phone but finds the calls a little difficult by phone. He does however see a good relationship forming between Greater Minnesota, Metropolitan Council and DNR. The Executive Director has worked on forming good partnerships with these bodies.

8. System Plan Coordinator's Report:

There is a series of DPC meetings coming in October. The strategic initiatives in each district will be of primary discussion, along with the ranking and scoring of projects in their districts.

9.4 ED Report on the statutory language in enabling legislation

There was an opportunity to clarify the language in a conversation with Laura Preus at the LAC meeting at Hartley in Duluth last month. Commissioner Ryan initiated the conversation and Laura confirmed we are taking the right steps.

9.5 Renewal of System Plan Coordinator Contract

It is the recommendation of the Executive Director that the Commission renew the System Plan Coordinator contract. The System Plan Coordinator should continue to disclose to the Executive Director if he contracts with other entities that have relationships with the Commission and the Executive Director will disclose that information to the Commission. Commissioner Wilcox would like to be more involved with the DPC.

Motion by Albrecht to renew the System Plan Coordinator contract

Second by J. Anderson

Motion Approved

9.6 Approval of new DPC member or District 2

Thomas Stinar has applied to be a member of District 2 planning committee. At the same time one of the newest DPC members, Keith Mykleseth has had to leave the DPC due to work commitments.

Motion by Schmitz to approve the application of Thomas Stinar to DPC 2 and to approve the resignation of Keith Mykleseth from DPC 2

Second by Pike

Motion Approved

10.1 Update Strategic Initiative in District 4

Water Based Recreation Opportunities

It became apparent when working on the Strategic Initiatives in District 4 that the language of Swimming Beach Opportunities was too limiting. The original language:

“Swimming Beach Opportunities – investigate opportunities to provide more developed facilities to address a defined demand throughout the district; includes defining if this type of facility needs to be part of a regional park, or can it be a standalone special feature regional amenity; if successful this could serve as a model for other districts to consider.”

Proposed language:

“Water-based Recreation – investigate opportunities to provide more developed facilities to address a defined demand for all types of water recreation throughout the district; includes identifying how various water-based activities support or define a regional-level natural resource or special recreational feature park; if successful, this could serve as a model for other districts to consider.”

This could become a strategic initiative for other districts as well. It was suggested by Commissioner Furshong that the new language doesn't address more leisure

activities connected to nature. The language was revised to incorporate leisure into the verbiage.

“Water-based Recreation – investigate opportunities to provide more developed facilities to address a defined demand for all types water recreation and leisure, both active and passive, throughout the district; includes identifying how various water-based activities support or define a regional-level natural resource or special recreational feature park; if successful, this could serve as a model for other districts to consider.”

Motion by Mattice to approve the language as presented by System Plan Coordinator

Second by Wendorf

Amendment by Ryan to incorporate the language as suggest by Commissioner Furshong

Motion Approved

9.3 Update criteria for grants and funding allowances

This round of funding applications will be more competitive than last year’s due to having more designated facilities competing for funding. Therefore, there is a need to have more detailed funding criteria to better define what the Commission is looking for, and how we arrived at our funding recommendations. This is not a change mid-course, rather more definition of what we are seeking in funding recommendations.

The Executive Director and Consultants will do research on each of the funding requests and provide initial recommendations for funding at the October Commission meeting for discussion. Final recommendations will come at the November Commission meeting.

Commissioner Mattice provided a document used by the DNR to determine what is and is not eligible in grant funding.

Motion by Wilcox to approve the funding criteria update as presented

Second by Furshong

Motion to table by Ryan

Second by Albrecht

Motion to Table Approved

Discussion continued about what would be most helpful to see on a map of the districts; Commissioners Nelson and Pike requested that it would be helpful to map the funding allocations along with the designations, in each district. There

was clarification that this round of funding applications is good for one year, there will be a second round next year. We are not awarding funding for the entire biennium in this round.

11. Consent Agenda:

Consulting Services	\$18,038.29
<u>Commissioners</u>	<u>\$2,838.08</u>
Total	\$20,876.37

Motion by Nelson
Second by Mattice
Motion Approved

Meeting Adjourned