

**Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission  
Meeting Minutes for October 22, 2014  
Sartell City Hall**

**Approved 11/26/14**

**Members Present:** Rita Albrecht; Rick Anderson; Bill Bruins; Al Liefkort; Marc Mattice; Keith Nelson; Bryan Pike; Anita Rasmussen; Tom Ryan; Tom Schmitz; Barry Wendorf; LuAnn Wilcox

**Members Absent:** Mike Hulett

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

**2. Motion** by Schmitz, second by Anderson: Approve the minutes of September 24, 2014. **Carried.**

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

Al added Communications Plan to the agenda under New Business.

**Motion** by Nelson, second by Schmitz: Approve the agenda as amended. **Carried.**

**4. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance**

Jeff and Kathy Schoenbauer, Schoenbauer Consulting LLC

Joe Czapiewski, JFC Strategic Services (serving the commission as System Plan Coordinator)

**5. Unfinished Business**

**5.1 - Legislation/Budget Update**

Al provided a budget summary with projections through 6/30/15. He is working with the fiscal agent to accurately code and track expenditures under the two grant funds: Capacity Building (11/13/2013 - 7/30/2017, \$203,000); System Plan (6/4/2014 - 6/30/2016, \$200,000).

Discussion included projected expenses for the work of the ETeam, implementation of the communications plan, administrative costs and staffing, and grants monitoring. The Commission will seek approval to budget 4.5% of appropriations for direct administration and 2.5% for grants monitoring by DNR staff. An amended and more detailed budget will be presented for discussion at the next regular meeting.

**Motion** by Wendorf, second by Mattice: Move DPC and ETeam expenses from the System Plan budget to the Capacity Building budget. **Motion carried.**

Further discussion centered on administrative structure options to fulfill *Key Support Functions*, as described on page 7 of the *Strategic Plan*: Management; Planning and Funding Oversight; and Information Technologies. The legislative subcommittee will draft an administrative plan that delineates these functions and defines the roles and work of commissioners, DPCs, the ETeam, consultants, paid staff, and contractual relationships, particularly with the DNR. The Commission is resolute in its need for an Executive Director and Administrative Assistant, and to forgo the expense of a physical office space in favor of an "office in the sky" via Amazon Web Services.

## 6. New Business

### 6.1 - Project Proposals Evaluation Team (ETeam) Report

92 applications for *Designation as Regionally Significant Parks and Trails* were received and evaluated by the ETeam, the results of which were presented in a draft report to the Commission, dated 10/23/2014. Applications were first divided into high, medium, and low ranking categories. Those which ranked high or medium were then scored against the criteria. The ETeam acknowledged that some applications receiving low rankings could be worthy of reconsideration in future funding cycles. Those applicants will be encouraged to work with the DPCs and Commissioners to improve the project concept and narrative. Projects that are unlikely to meet the criteria regardless of resubmission (i.e. too small, not natural resource based, or lacking unique features) will be referred to other funding sources. Conversely, there were high quality projects, particularly trails that traverse large areas or connect to state trails, that may be more appropriately part of the state or national parks systems, so they were not evaluated. However, the Commission will work with the DNR to determine where there are opportunities for "partner-led" developments, and will assist in facilitating collaboration between jurisdictions to consolidate interrelated projects into one proposal.

Questions arose from this nascent process, as expected. The ETeam put forth a list of ten issues for the Commission to address. They will be meeting again on November 5 to specifically discuss and make recommendations about the applications and evaluation processes. The Commission will discuss their findings at subsequent meetings, beginning with issues related to a statewide mountain biking system and motorized trail uses.

The consultants noted the professionalism, efficiency, and macro-focus of the ETeam, and that its members were impressed with what the Commission has accomplished since its inception. The Commission acknowledged the value and quality of the ETeam's work, and expressed gratitude for its diligence through a volume of work in an imperfect, evolving process.

### Initial System Plan Outline

Schoenbauer Consulting distributed a draft outline of the initial *Statewide Parks & Trails System Plan* under development for submission to the legislature January 15, 2015. It includes a description of the work efforts of the Commission to date: adoption of operating procedures; creation of the strategic plan; establishment and meetings of District Planning Committees (DPCs); selecting and convening the Evaluation Team (ETeam). The report will summarize the findings of the DPCs relative to system planning, and the ETeam application of criteria for regionally significant designation and the ranking/scoring processes.

The plan will report on the information management systems employed by the Commission for its administration and public access objectives: web pages under the legacy.leg.mn.us web site; list serv administration; GoMN mapping and inventory system; Amazon Web Services. The Commission is also embracing the Governor's directive for digital information strategies and is working with the DNR and Met Council to integrate and implement these systems.

The report will also define an action plan and pro-active strategies for 2015 and 2016: development of comprehensive performance measurement tools; qualitative, multi-dimensional assessment; extensive research pertaining to trends, demographics, recreation needs and demands that will inform long range system planning.

Finally, the report will describe the staffing and professional support needs of the Commission as it assumes the administrative functions of system planning and development, including project proposal processing and grant funding. The Commission acknowledges the new, unique, and massive undertaking it has been charged with, and will need an organizational structure that enables high quality, Legacy-worthy outcomes.

## **6.2 - Commission Appointments**

Members agreed that continuity is desirable during these early years and encouraged those whose terms are expiring in January to apply for reappointment. Commissioners will seek out candidates for open seats, and will post notice through the list serv. The deadline for applications is November 25.

## **6.3 - Communications Plan**

Anita led a discussion of the Communications Plan she drafted for the Commission. As the work volume and complexity increases, the Commission needs consistent messaging and easy public access to information. Members agreed that the starting point is defining key messages and determining a mission/vision statement, to be included in an executive summary describing "who we are, what we've done, and where we're going." LuAnn will receive suggested mission and vision statements from members and draft an aggregate statement for discussion at the November meeting. Anita will integrate other comments into a revision of the plan.

## **6.4 - Definition of Regional Park and Regional Trail**

This item was tabled and will be discussed along with other issues raised by the ETeam at the November meeting.

## **6.5 - Connect People to the Outdoors**

As defined by the Legacy Advisory Committee, "Connecting people to the outdoors are projects that are non-capital items that attract new users and retain existing users." While Legacy funds heretofore administered for Greater Minnesota by the DNR have not solicited projects or provided funding under this, one of four *Strategic Directions* identified in the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*, members agreed that the Commission needs to address this concern.

The DNR uses 13% - 17% of its Legacy appropriation in this endeavor, primarily for interpretive programming, and the Metropolitan Council 3%.

Discussion included ideas for integrating this strategic direction into the system plan, ranging from: encouraging agencies to seek foundation grant opportunities to fund programs, events, and marketing; to partnering with Extension Service, DNR Naturalists, Environmental Educators, SHIP, and Public Health departments; to becoming "a major experiential employer for the next generation of students coming through" by funding an internship program. Another suggestion was to require a "connecting people to the outdoors" component as part of any development funding, such as a kick-off event and press releases, at a minimum. As the physical parks and trails system becomes more fully realized, connecting people to the facilities can and will become a greater priority. A separate grant process could provide funds for programs, events, and activities, especially for children and youth, that facilitate

recreational opportunities (e.g. school field trips, equipment rentals, engaging urban groups through recreation centers, community education, and non-profit organizations).

Members agreed that signage identifying projects as Legacy funded should be required, and that further discussion, and possibly appointing a subcommittee, be considered.

## 7. Consent Agenda

Rita reviewed the bills and claims as follows:

- ETeam expenses	272.16
- JFC Strategic Services	8,019.34
- Schoenbauer Consulting	3,479.20
- Clerical Services	1,000.00
- Commissioners expenses	1,646.50

**Motion** by Albrecht, second by Wendorf: Approve the consent agenda in the amount of \$14,417.20  
**Motion carried.**

## 8. Items from members

LuAnn asked if the sub-group to work with partner organizations had been selected. Bryan attended the meeting of the Coalition and became the only member by default.

Bill reported that he and Tom R. had attended the MN Association of Planning and Zoning Administrators conference on September 26 and showed the Commission's power point presentation. He was pleased with the level of interest and said there were many questions following the presentation.

Rita requested an update regarding the Coalition and Al agreed to put it on the November agenda. She reported that she and Anita had met with the Coalition lobbyist who identified their legislative agenda as: maintaining the 40-40-20 split; requesting more funding for local parks in Greater Minnesota; supporting the Commission's legislative agenda.

Members discussed legislative committees, leadership, and representatives who are likely to be allies and advocates for the work of the Commission.

**The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for November 26, 2014.**

**Motion** to adjourn was made by Wendorf, second by Bruins. **Motion carried.**

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