



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Minutes for August 26, 2020

Sartell Community Center

Sartell, MN

**APPROVED**

**Commissioners Present:** Tim Engrav, Beth Pierce, Bryan Pike, Brad Bonk, Rick Anderson, Ted Suss, Barry Wendorf, Jonathan Wolf, Tom Ryan, Tom Stoa

**Commissioners Absent:** Matthew Hill, Peg Furshong, Jen Foley

**Consultants Present:** Renee Mattson, Executive Director, Joe Czapiewski, System Plan Coordinator

**1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Ryan at 10:11am**

**GMRPTC Succession Planning**

*Ryan* introduced the topic of succession planning and the need for resiliency related to the charge of the Commission. Consultants have taken measures to ensure the information that is the history and function of the Commission is available in the ExaVault files. *Ryan* wants Commissioners to weigh in on whether it is felt we have enough preparation given to the process, or should we have a more fully detailed discussion and work plan? Would forming a subcommittee to review what is in place and provide suggestions be something to consider? *Mattson* reviewed the plans she and *Czapiewski* have discussed; which is to 1. maintain good information relevant to the applications and master plan work in the DMS and 2. prepare a folder within ExaVault "Succession Planning" that will contain passwords, time lines of process, calendars, contacts and the historical information that would be needed in the event both consultants would unexpectedly leave the Commission at the same time. *Ryan* called on *Commissioner Wolf* to ask his professional legal opinion. *Wolf* agreed the steps being taken are reasonable and suggested that we have a designated Commissioner who is familiar with the systems and well able to find the information should something occur. *Stoa* asked if *Margy* will be returning and if *Mattson* will continue to take care of her responsibilities. *Wendorf* would like to have a refresher on the ExaVault and perhaps have all the meeting materials stored there and allow the Commissioners to just go there for the information. *Bonk* suggested that maybe we roll the job of administrative

assistant into a position that would also do some mapping for us as that is more of a need we have. Suss prefers we keep everything electronic rather than use paper that is not necessary.

Robust discussion followed about how to best keep information up to date and available to Commissioners. Suggestion that there be a plan in place for members of the Executive Committee have access to the DMS where the consultants keep notes from each application and record information from phone calls and site visits. Continue to review the guidelines and update them as we evolve. Keep the information in ExaVault and ensure Commissioners are familiar with the system.

There was a general consensus that we have what we need in place and consultants will continue to update the systems and keep the Commissioners informed of the progress.

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

No one from the public in attendance

**3. Approval of Agenda for August 26, 2020, Minutes from July 22, 2020 and Treasurer's Report through July 2020**

**Motion** by Anderson

**Second** by Engrav

**Motion Approved**

**4. Executive Director's Report**

Included in the packet

**5. System Plan Coordinator's Report**

Included in the packet

*Pike* inquired of *Czapiewski* what has been communicated to the DPCs regarding the new format. *Czapiewski* is still working on that communication and thanked *Pike* for his outreach in District 2.

**6. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission**

*Wendorf* wants to reiterate that their parks are seeing a huge amount of use, as much as three times the usage from summers past.

*Bonk* has heard that the new Robbins Island Visitor Center is getting a lot of use and it's a beautiful new facility.

*Stoa* stopped at Afton State Park on the way up and saw a large number of people on the trails there.

*Wolf* noted an acquaintance has asked about the status of funding a rehabilitation project on the Lake Wobegon Trail.

## **7. New Business:**

### **7.1 Review of Application Process – Designation – Master Plan – Funding**

*Czapiewski* explained the application process of how facilities become regionally designated. Projects that rank High may submit a Master Plan using the Commission's on-line Master Plan Portal for scoring the facility against the Strategic Plan criteria. Commissioners deliberate and decide facility designation once scored. Designated facilities are then eligible to apply for Legacy funding. The Power Point information will be sent to all Commissioners. It was agreed this was a very thorough review process and will be good to have available to refer to. The PP is also on the ExaVault for Commissioners to access.

### **7.2 First Overview of FY22 Funding Applications**

*Czapiewski* provided Commissioners with the initial review of the 14 eligible funding applications received for FY22. Consultants will complete the site visits by Friday, August 28 and will begin their individual review process. Commissioners discussed several of the applications.

### **7.3 Approval of Phase IV of DMS Update/Upgrade**

**Motion** by Wendorf

**Second** by Bonk

**Motion Approved**

### **7.4 Resolution to Approve Completion of Detroit Mountain Recreation Area Grant with Resolution 011.**

**Motion** by Bonk

**Second** by Suss

**Motion Approved**

### **7.5 Facility Survey**

*Mattson* explained the reasoning behind creation of the survey and asked for Commissioner feedback. *Wendorf* asked if this will be an annual survey, if not, the information will not be current from year to year. *Bonk* asked if this will be something a park or trail can avoid filling out if there are no changes to the facility. A very good discussion ensued about ways to make the research ongoing and more helpful over time.

## **8. Old Business:**

### **8.1 Funding Work Group Update**

*Anderson* reviewed the final Funding Work Group meeting activities with the Commissioners and noted that discussions have come to an end. *Ryan* wants a public statement from the Commission to be prepared for legislators. *Suss* inquired who was going to be preparing the draft agreement and when we could review it.



**9. Approval of August Expenses**

Consultants: \$18,234.93

Commissioners: \$5,628.82

Total \$23,863.75

**Motion by Pike**

**Second by Wendorf**

**Motion Approved**

**10. Next Meeting and Agenda Items**

**10.1** Commission members attended a brief site visit to the Sauk River Regional Park.

**10.2** September 23 at the Sartell Community Center 10:00am-3:00pm.

**11. Adjourn 3:00pm**

**Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission**  
**Director's Report for August 2020**

*Funding Work Group*

The group met on what turned out to be our last meeting, on July 29. The group was not able to reach consensus and felt that the final meeting on August 5 would not lead to a consensus. Despite suggestions for ways we might continue to work together we were left with DNR and GM agreeing to continue the 40-40-20 and the Coordination Among Partner funds to support the PTLAC work and Met Council supporting a different distribution model. At this time, we are still waiting for the July 29 draft notes as well as the draft report from the Mediation Center staff. Next steps, to be determined.

*Designated Parks and Trails Survey*

There was a great deal of discussion during the funding work group calls about data, and specifically the lack of data attributable to Greater Minnesota. We know that the Streetlight Data Research upcoming in the next two years will provide a much richer picture of park/trail visitation. However, with an upcoming legislative session and a still to be determined funding distribution, it's necessary we glean more data from our 64 designated parks and trails in the GM system. A survey has been developed that will allow us to learn much more about our system and provide comparable data to our two partners, less visitation numbers which will only be available for those that currently keep records. The survey was sent in the packet last week and will have a test run with two of our facilities. Following their comments and feedback the survey will go out to all facilities in the next week or two.

*Funding Application Site Visits*

August is a busy month with site visits for funding application projects as well as the DNR visits for final inspections on some of our grant projects. Joe and I have visited the following sites for funding application reviews:

- Moorhead Midtown Trail
- Duluth Spirit Mountain
- Lake County Split Rock Wilds | we also took the opportunity to view the construction happening at the new DNR campground near Split Rock State Park. This will be a fabulous new campground and the Lake County Mountain Bike Trails will have access into the park.
- Sandstone Robinson Park
- Chisago County Sunrise Prairie Trail
- Red Lake River Corridor – communities of East Grand Forks, Fisher, Crookston, Red Lake Falls, St. Hilaire and Thief River Falls. We were able to see some of the improvements prior grants have made possible as well.
- Mesabi Trail | we also had the opportunity to look around the new Lake Vermilion State Park while we were in the area. Another fabulous new park made possible through

Legacy dollars. They were just completing work on the new camper cabins, which will be well used I'm sure.

- Nisswa Gull Lake Trail

The final visits will take place on Thursday and Friday on a southern and western visit schedule including:

- Winona Bluffs Traverse
- Olmsted County Oxbow Park
- Austin Jay C. Hormel Nature Center
- Luverne Loop
- Granite Falls Memorial Park

#### DNR Site Visits

We've been kept apprised of DNR staff travel to GM parks and trails closing out grants and were able to schedule visits for those purposes during our trips to Moorhead and Mesabi Trail. During our visits the end of the week we've coordinated to visit Cascade Park in Rochester for a close out inspection.

#### Racial Equity Work

I sit on two committees for the Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee, Benchmarks and Inclusion. The Inclusion Committee has been evolving over time and I think is now hitting its stride. By inclusion we refer to promoting parks and trails to all ages, people of color, underserved communities, accessibility and discussing racial equity.

Purpose of the Committee:

The mission of the Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee is "to champion the 25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan by providing recommendations to enhance promotion, coordination, and accountability throughout implementation of the plan."

We have several new committee members, one of whom is Jon Oyanagi, recently retired from Ramsey County where he was the Director of Parks and Recreation. Jon has been doing work with groups to lead racial equity workshops. Jon has been involved in the PTLAC before his recent appointment; he attended as a representative of the 10 implementing agencies of Met Council. Jon and I have had conversations about his working with the Commission to talk about racial equity in our 64 parks and trails in Greater Minnesota and how we might help that discussion among our partners. This is work I personally feel is important and a topic that isn't always comfortable, but it's a necessary conversation to have.

I'm hopeful we can carve out time during our September and October meetings to work with Jon.

Partner Assistance

- Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp, issues with archeological survey and some premature blasting work.
- Gull Lake Trail, Fairview Township section. Bids significantly over budget.

Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails

Communications committee work. Looking for ways to create a video library to showcase some of the creative ideas around park programming in the time of a pandemic.



**GMRPTC**  
**System Plan Coordinators Report**  
**August 2020**

**2020 Funding Applications**

A total of fourteen qualified funding applications have been submitted. I will provide an introductory report on those applications at the Commission meeting. Here is a list of the site visits Renee and I have conducted so far:

- Moorhead River Trail (Midtown Segment) – similar to previous applications
- Lake County Split Rock Wilds – proposed “green” trail will parallel the destination “black” trail between the main campgrounds/trailheads. Construction progress on the currently funded “black” trail project was also reviewed.
- Duluth Spirit Mountain – similar to last year’s application
- Sandstone Robinson Park – completes components taken out of last year’s funded project
- Chisago County Sunrise Prairie Trail – similar to previous applications
- Red Lake River Corridor – proposed construction in East Grand Forks is scaled back from last year’s proposal, with an all new CPO component
- Mesabi Trail – reconstruction of an existing original trail segment in Tower
- Gull Lake Trail – similar to last year’s application in Nisswa and Lake Shore

Coming application site reviews:

- Winona Bluffs Traverse – similar to last year’s application, slightly scaled back
- Olmsted County Oxbow Park – next phase of last year’s funded project
- Austin Jay Hormel Nature Center – New project, first application
- Luverne Loop – New project, first application
- Granite Falls Memorial Park – similar to last year’s application, slightly scaled back
- Wright County Parks (Bertram) – New CPO project

**On-Site Reviews and Technical Assistance**

Several agencies were provided with technical assistance or on-site reviews during the past month.

- Warroad is making progress on their Master Plan for the Warroad Harbor project on Lake of the Woods. They asked for a review of the draft document so they can make adjustments prior to final upload into the DMS.
- Oronoco (Zumbro River Water Trail) is figuring out the best way to engage their planning consultant and move forward with the planning process. We spent time talking through several related issues for funding, public engagement, and the role of the consultant in a large, geographically diverse project.
- I conducted a self-guided tour of Pine Valley Park in Cloquet, which has recently had a Designation Application rank high. I was able to observe the ski jumps, chalet, cross country ski trails, and even talked to their mountain bike trail builder who was finishing up a project. A follow up call with the lead volunteer planner added guidance on how to approach the master planning project.
- Renee and I met on site with Fairview Township (Gull Lake Trail) and their engineering contingent. They are working through several scope and scale issues. Several paths forward were discussed, which will be brought to the commission when appropriate.
- Morrison County Belle Prairie Park provided an update on their Legacy funded plan update project. We talked through public engagement techniques in the age of COVID, as well as what ultimately needs to be completed with the funds provided.



- Renee and I also joined DNR staff who conducted grant close-out reviews for the Moorhead Downtown trail segment and the Mesabi Trail Lake Vermilion State Park segment. Both were done in conjunction with nearby funding application site visits.

#### **Strategic Plan Update**

We are moving forward with our graphic designer to put together the first three chapters of the strategic plan. We hope to have most of the remaining document put together for an ETeam meeting next month, which will guarantee a clearly packed meeting!

#### **Partner Agency Survey**

We have been developing a basic inventory survey targeting all of our partner agencies/facilities. The goal is to gather needed information about size, infrastructure, programming and usage for the coming legislative session and related contacts. The survey is now out to a select couple of partners for testing before we send it to the full contingent of agencies.

#### **GMRPTC Education – Webinar Invite**

The training seminar I provided for the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association was well received and well attended, with over 30 participants. We will continue to look for those kinds of opportunities since we have been unable to provide our own on-site workshops this year.