



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Cannon Falls City Hall – 918 River Road

Cannon Falls, MN 55009

Minutes for August 23, 2023

APPROVED

Commissioners Present: Rick Anderson, Jen Foley, Brad Bonk (virtual), Jonathan Wolf, Reid Huttunen (virtual), Beth Pierce (virtual), Tim Engrav (virtual), Rob Mason, Tom Stoa (virtual), Barry Wendorf, Peg Furshong, Karlin Ziegler, Tom Schmitz

Consultants Present: Renee Mattson - Executive Director, Joe Czapiewski – System Plan Coordinator, Tess Dandrea – Administrative Assistant (virtual)

1. Call to Order Chair Anderson at 10:00

Meeting goals are to be timely and efficient.

2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance - Brad Anderson, Goodhue County Commissioner and Jennifer Ziemer, Goodhue County Public Works Admin/Accounting Assistant.

3. Approval of Agenda for August 23, 2023, Minutes from June 28, 2023 and Treasurer's Report through June 2023

Motion by Wolf

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

4. Executive Director's Report:

Along with her written report, Mattson discussed the DNR administrative fee of 2.5% and the work she has been doing to understand better how the cost aligns with the actual time it takes to administer and monitor the grants. An equipment survey was discussed along with "Art in the Parks" budget.

5. System Plan Coordinator's Report

In addition to his written report, Joe thanked the Commissioners for their attendance at site visits.

6. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission

Bonk – nothing

Wendorf – nothing

Huttunen – recently hired as the City Administrator in East Grand Forks

Stoa -fishing is great on Lake of the Woods, he caught his limit!

Pierce - Mesabi Trail had their annual trail tour with the new sections near Ely. It received rave reviews with about 450 people in attendance, which is down a bit from usual. The lowered attendance was a surprise as the new director has been doing a great job.

Foley – participated in several site visits and was at the Lake Brophy Park Grand opening.

Ziegler – is excited to be here. Oxbow Park has been busy in the new nature center building. They discovered that sound baffling is needed in the exhibit hall.

Schmitz – continued involvement in potential sessions at MRPA and even NRPA.

Furshong – Southern district talk about land transfer from DNR to Upper Sioux. She has been doing investigative work for “Art in the Parks”.

Mason – honored to be here. Has previously served on the DPC and did attend the site visit at the Cannon Valley Trail this week.

Wolf – went to Quarry Park and saw the goats eating the buckthorn.

Anderson - SWRDC– got a grant to do trail work and both staff members that we work with have recently gotten different jobs and left the organization.

7. New Business:

7.1 Grant Funding Policy Review

Discussion on whether or not the July 31st deadline to submit the resolution to accept funding is a hard deadline. As background, we have accepted resolutions after the deadline when we have been notified in advance there was a problem with the timing of the meeting. This topic has been discussed previously.

Wendorf stated that other grants he has applied for enforced deadlines. Bonk and Wolf agreed that a deadline is a deadline. Huttunen asked if we should consider pushing the deadline back. Wendorf said we also need time for our decision process so pushing back the timeline wouldn't work very well. The discussion included county/city meeting and holiday schedules, alternate deadlines and in the end, it was agreed that the process is long enough to get the work completed. While we may have been flexible in the past when notified there would be an issue having the resolution by the deadline, Furshong stated we bend over backwards to give all the help we can, but we must be consistent to be fair. Our notice goes out in April and four months is plenty of time

Foley inquired as to what the two current applicants that missed the deadline were told, and Joe responded they were told to submit the resolutions when they got them. Staff has been in communication with the current applicants, and the resolutions are in, but they are technically late. An exception will be granted for these two projects but in the future July 31st is a firm deadline.

Motion by Furshong “to accept the two late resolutions but have a hard deadline of July 31st going forward”.

Second by Mason

A roll call vote was held:

Anderson - abstain

Bonk -nay

Huttunen - aye

Stoa - aye

Pierce - aye

Schmitz - aye

Furshong - aye

Mason - aye

Ziegler - aye

Wolf - aye

Wendorf - nay

Foley – aye

Motion Approved

7.2 Initial Overview of FY25 Funding Applications

Regarding 23-008F – Morrison County, Belle Prairie Park Waterfront, Bonk asked if verification has been made that Morrison County has talked to DNR about the boat launch. Czapiewski will get an answer and report back.

A question was asked as to how many applications and funding requests exist. The answer is 22 applications with a total of \$36.5 million in requests and just under \$17 million to grant.

7.3 ARC GIS Expense

Motion by Schmitz of up \$4000 for the development of a new mapping site and \$110 per hour for ongoing updates and maintenance

Second by Furshong

Motion Approved

8. Old Business:

8.1 DNR Administrative Expenses covered in Mattson’s report.

8.2 FY25 Availability of Grant Funding also covered in Mattson’s report.

9. Chair Anderson asked for suggestions for 2024 meeting locations.

Ney Nature Center

Prairie Woods

Lac Qui Parle

Oxbow Nature Center

Quarry Park in Stearns County

Mesabi Trail

Tioga -Fall /October
Grand Rapids/Milford Mine
Grand Marais
North West Angle
Hubbard County Deep Lake Park
Garvin / Twin Lakes
Lake Brophy Park

10. Approval of July and August 2023 Expenses

July 2023 \$23,823.14

August 2023 \$26,826.76

Motion by Schmitz to approve both months expenses

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

11. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

Duluth Hartley Nature Center September 27, 2023

Meeting adjourned 1:35pm and a tour of Lake Byllesby County Park followed.

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission
Director's Report for August 2023

Partner Meetings

- GMPT Newsletter Article
- PTLAC Liaison's Calls
- GMPT Membership Committee
- GMPT Communications Committee

Mountain Bike Trail Development Appendices/French Translation

We have had calls with Jake Carsten, who wrote our Mountain Bike Guide, and Rich Edwards from West Virginia University who is an outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Coordinator developing an outline for what the first three appendices will look like and timing for them. We're still trying to pull together a budget and a working group to manage the process, but I believe we will get this project off the ground the first quarter of 2024. As well, we have contracted with Velo Quebec Association and the translation of the guide into French is underway.

FY25 Funding Applications

Joe and I, as well as some Commissioners, are in the midst of the FY25 funding application site visits. We had a busy two days in District 4 last week visiting all nine of the application sites. It's good to see another year with several new applicants who have never before applied for funding. With more than \$35 million in requests and just shy of \$16 million in available funding, we will have an interesting fall of discussions. We are just over halfway to completion of the visits.

DNR Budget Meeting

After many months of trying to gain clarity about the 2.5% DNR administrative fee, I finally had a meeting with DNR grant and financial staff. Unfortunately the person who can bring clarity to the expense had a family emergency and was unable to attend the meeting. I'll have more information to add about the meeting during my report at the Commission meeting.

Equipment Survey – Loan Program

After several failed attempts to send a survey from our data management system asking for information about what equipment parks in our system have available for rent, I went the "old fashion" route and sent it out via email. The vast majority of those surveyed have responded and I'll be spending some time in the next week or two compiling the responses and sharing the information with the committee as well as all of you. Just a reminder that this came about after Legacy Committee members in the House asked about the possibility of a loan program for equipment to assist those without the means to rent equipment to try an activity.

GMRPTC
System Plan Coordinators Report
August 2023

Reviews

A Designation Application was received for the Biwabik Recreation Area. The ETeam is looking forward to providing a rank for that application and an advisory review of the funding applications in September before visiting the Commission in person in October.

Technical Assistance

Since the last report, there has been a flurry of activity helping finalize, review, and support funding applications for the July 31 deadline. As we will detail in this month's presentation, we have received 22 applications worth approximately \$35,000,000. Thank you to everyone who has helped encourage our applicants, reviewed applications, and attend site visits.

While we are in the middle of the funding application site visit process, we continue to provide technical assistance to our other regional partners. Renee and I visited Red Wing's He Mne Can Park to review updates to their previously funded project and talk about the next potential phase. We were then joined by Commissioner Stoa at Hok Si La Park in Lake City, which has been stalled at the master planning phase for many years. Leaders from their park, planning, and public works staff sat down with us to discuss the process and what is needed to move forward. We also did a site tour of their large and unique property on Lake Pepin.

Other previously funded projects and designation-eligible facilities have continued to stay in touch with us and ask for assistance as it is needed. We are looking forward project close-outs in Fergus Falls and other locations, and helping keep other projects on track as lingering effects of COVID delays continue.

Funding Application Review

Renee and I (and a few of you) have been busy starting funding application site visits. I am barely keeping ahead of the visits by approving applications for review, which places them into your DMS portal so you also have a chance to see them. I am doing my best, thank you for your patience! We will continue to send you the updated site visit schedule as new sites are added. Thanks for letting me know when you are able to attend!

As of right now we are halfway done with our visits. The presentation on the applications this month will be very preliminary. We do not have scores until after all visits are completed and the ETeam has had a chance to weigh in.

District and Partner Outreach

We are planning for our presentations to the MN APA conference in St. Cloud in October. If you know of another relevant organization, whether it be groups of agency staff or elected officials, or various user groups, please help us connect with them. We want to keep telling this story!

Consultant Projects

Jillian and I are wrapping up our evaluation and proposal for needed changes to our Geographic Information System. We will provide more details at the meeting. This is expected to be a reasonably-priced initiative that will help keep us updated and informed.

The DMS project continues, focusing recently on challenges in our current listserv system tied to our blog posts. We are resolving it and hope to launch a completely new system in the next month. Full Circle Group is also helping us with documentation/staff tutorials of some of our new processes for surveys, newsletters, etc. This is an important feature for organizational sustainability.