



## **Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission**

East Grand Forks City Hall

East Grand Forks, MN

**Minutes for June 28, 2023**

**APPROVED**

**Commissioners Present:** Rick Anderson, Jen Foley, Brad Bonk, Jonathan Wolf, Reid Huttunen, Beth Pierce (virtual), Tim Engrav (virtual), Rob Mason (virtual) Tom Stoa (virtual)

**Commissioners Absent:** Peg Furshong, Barry Wendorf and Bryan Pike,

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

**1. Call to Order Chair Anderson at 10:00am**

Meeting Goals are to be efficient and timely.

Introduction of new Commission Member Rob Mason for District 2, replacing Commissioner Bryan Pike. Rob is a retired East Gull Lake City Administrator and previously retired as the Director of Sales for Madden's Resort. Chair Anderson welcomed him on behalf of the Commissioners, and all present introduced themselves. The remaining two Commission seats filled are: District 5 Commissioner Tom Schmitz who previously held this seat, and District 6 Commissioner Karlin Ziegler. Due to the lateness of the appointments it was not possible for Schmitz nor Ziegler to attend the meeting.

**2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance – Mike Hulett a former District 3 Commissioner from Moorhead.**

**3. Approval of Agenda for June 28, 2023, Minutes from May 24, 2023, and Treasurer's Report through May 2023.**

**Motion** by Bonk

**Second** by Foley

**Motion Approved**

**4. Executive Director's Report:**

Mattson stated we are coming in under budget for the year and have a \$950,000 operating budget for the FY24/25 biennium, an increase from the FY22/23 biennium of \$912,000. We have had a request from Velo Quebec to have the Mountain Bike Trail Development Guide translated into French, which they would pay for. We've also talked with a professor from West Virginia University who has funding for creation of a trail signage package. We could potentially partner with them on the project. The basis is the creation of international symbols, for example standard colors standardized icons. The cost is yet unknown. Evolve Creative, our creative company from the trail guide might be a good resource to develop these. It would be an appendix to the guide. Also talk about having another appendix with information helpful to purchasing. Suggestion from Commissioner Bonk that we include some of the trail builders that have worked in Minnesota to gain support and ideas from that sector. Another appendix that would be helpful is on procurement.

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

Czapiewski is arranging meetings with facilities that have ranked High but have not completed a master plan yet. Commissioners will be provided information on the meetings so they may attend if interested. Commissioner Mason asked if there is a place he can learn about what projects have been funded and in which districts. He can refer to the website, Our Work page to look at the legislative reports that list what project have been funded. Commissioner Foley asked how many designation eligible parks and trails there are within the system? Around 20. Are there more in one district than another? Current numbers of designation eligible facilities: District 1 has seven, District 2 has three, District 3 has one, District 4 has one, District 5 has two and District 6 has three.

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

*Stoa – no*

*Pierce – no*

*Engrav – no*

*Wolf – no*

*Huttunen - no*

*Foley – attended the Luverne Loop Bike Trail Grand Opening. Very well received opening, lots of people using the trail and a well-planned event.*

*Bonk - stated WCCO "Finding Minnesota" did a story on Phelps Mill, which was very well done. Talked to Willmar parks staff about their funding request.*

*Anderson - also attended the Luverne Loop Grand Opening. Fun to see how many people were there. He sent pictures to Mattson and Czapiewski of the lake in Luverne. It's an old gravel pit and a developer has built a number of buildings there for rental on the lake.*

**7. New Business:**

**7.1 FY2024/FY2025 Budget Review:**

Total \$950,000 for the biennium, \$475,000 each year

**Motion** by Foley to approve the Resolution for Fiscal Year 2024/Fiscal Year 2025 operating budget

**Second** by Wolf

**Motion Approved**

Budget category and resolution attached.

**7.2 Chisago County Fish Lake County Park Designation Application 22-001D**

Fish Lake County Park is a 129.5 mile park with 13 acres of waterfront beach, water activity and parking. There is a paved county road that runs through the park and separates it east and west.

The ETeam evaluation ranked this park as Medium. A qualified Master Plan was submitted but not reviewed due to the Medium rank. ETeam comments; facility extremely well used with high quality water and natural resources. Question was asked if additional users will impact water quality? If medium rank accepted, the application would be sent back with the ETeam comments.

**Motion** by Bonk to accept the rank of Medium by the Evaluation Team

**Second** by Foley

**Motion Approved**

**7.3 Discussion on Statutory Language Changes from 2023 Legislative Session**

Expanding communication/cooperation with Tribal governments and non-profits. Expand the designation process to Tribal Governments and review and follow the same process we currently use for cities and counties. Language will be simple, cities, counties and Tribal governments.

Non-profit access to funding would need to flow through a designated facility to qualify. Examples of good partnerships might be Environmental Learning Centers and Arts Councils.

**8. Old Business:**

**8.1 Art in the Park – Update**

Mattson shared the latest project budget proposal which arrives at the same bottom line, and not enough funding for the art projects themselves.

**Motion** by Foley to reject the PTLAC proposal and request our third of the project budget so that we can do our own program

**Second** by Bonk

**Motion Approved**

**9. Approval of May 2023 Expenses**

Consultants	\$28,217.73
<u>Commissioners</u>	<u>\$ 3,301.95</u>
	\$31,519.68

**Motion** by Foley to approve the May 2023 expenses

**Second** by Anderson

**Motion Approved**

**Discussion** to approve Bryan Pike as alternate to approve invoices and compensate him with the current per diem for doing the work

**Motion** by Wolf

**Second** by Huttunen

**Motion Approved**

**10. Next Meeting and Agenda Items**

No July meeting, next meeting will be August 23, 2023 at Lake Byllesby Park

**Meeting adjourned at 12:53pm**

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

**Location Based Data Research**

Two years ago the Parks and Trails Legacy partners, MN Department of Natural Resources, Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission embarked on a joint research project. The research was based on location based data from a company called Streetlight Data, a company that gathers anonymized cell phone information.

The project was headed by Raven McKnight, a data research scientist based out of the Met Council, with assistance from another Met Council research scientist, Ellen Esch. The research the first year focused on the parks in the three systems, as well as GMRPTC designation eligible parks, meaning they had applied for, and received, a High rank on their designation application, but had not yet submitted a Master Plan for review and scoring.

The second year of the project looked at trails in the three systems, and again included designation eligible trails in Greater Minnesota.

At the end of the two-years a series of webinars over four days described a different aspect of the research, allowing for questions from the attendees.

Now, a summary of the research, as well as the webinars, are available for review and study by anyone with an interest. The information presented allows a user to compare and contrast park or trail visitation against other facilities in the three systems.

The project was thorough and complex, so the best way to begin understanding what the research showed and how the information was gathered is to visit the new website:

[Minnesota Parks and Trails \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

and listen to the webinar recordings:

[Webinar series | Minnesota Parks and Trails \(arcgis.com\)](#)

As mentioned earlier, this joint project would not be possible without support from the Parks and Trails Legacy, Coordination Among Partners fund.

Please take a moment to explore the website and the vast trove of information available.

**GMRPTC**  
**System Plan Coordinators Report**  
**June 2023**

**Reviews**

The ETeam has completed their ranking review of the Designation Application for Chisago County's Fish Lake Park. I was hoping there would be one or two other facilities coming in, but we decided to move ahead with only the one this month so they didn't have to wait any longer. This is a facility I conducted a formal site review for, since they did turn in a Master Plan along with the application. We will review the outcome at the meeting.

**Technical Assistance**

Funding application questions continue to come in regularly via phone, email, and Zoom. As of this time, we appear to be closer to achieving our pre-COVID application numbers than we have recently. Only time will tell what comes in at the end of July. Applicants have been very good about bringing their consultant and staff teams together to ask questions and make sure their application will be of quality. Hopefully the projects will be, as well! So far the changes to guidance and tools for 2023 have been well received and helpful.

Renee and I have been catching up with some of our grant recipients from 2020-21, who may or may not be affected by recent inflation pressures (you asked us to check in on them last month). Most funding recipients have already been taking steps to mitigate costs, such as re-bidding, scope changes (which you have or will have to approve), or finding additional funding. In a couple of cases we have encouraged the recipient to submit a new funding application this summer to cover the differences they are finding. It is painful, but not catastrophic for our system and partners.

**District and Partner Outreach**

I had to take a few weeks off from the tour due to a family medical issue. After being contacted by county staff, I had a chance to make a quick trip to Cook County/Grand Marais for a long-sought visit. Sorry I didn't have time to notify the Commission on short notice; we had to take the opportunity while it existed. We accomplished a few things:

- Got staff up to speed on the funded Cook County Mountain Bike Trail project and our involvement.
- Extensively discussed the process for completing a Master Plan for the designation-eligible Sawtooth Bluffs and reviewed the new dog park they have developed there.
- Visited with staff at the City of Grand Marais' lakeside Recreation Area/Campground/Marina. They have recently hired a consultant to complete their Master Plan and are already conducting public engagement. They have also built a new boat landing and breakwater, removed old buildings, and are having a fantastic summer camping season.
- Lake County staff were not available, so I solo toured some of the Split Rock Wilds mountain bike trails through the new campground at Split Rock State Park.

We are working hard to set up more site visits over this summer. Some can wait until they have submitted a funding application, so we are focusing more right now on potential applicants and agencies we haven't heard from in a while.

I submitted two presentation proposals for the American Planning Association-Minnesota Chapter's fall conference. If accepted, one will be a panel discussion about the development process for Sherburne County's Big Lake Park. Participants will be County Rec Coordinator Gina Hugo, as well as three tribal representatives and myself. The other presentation will be an opportunity to share the GMRPTC story,

including how we leverage Legacy funding to encourage good planning and improve outcomes for users. Participants in that forum will be myself, Renee, and Chair Rick Anderson.

### **Consultant Projects**

Renee and I independently conducted a review of the draft report for the Streetlight Project. Luckily, we both commented on many of the same things, so we still appear to be on the same page after all these years! We are excited about the final product and the uses for it our regional partners will have – and are already leveraging.

For those of you who haven't received word, we had to make some changes to our Exavault cloud storage system, which is now owned by Files.com. We received significant cost savings by reducing the number of users to the system, which was largely achieved by having the Commission access the cloud through one username and password. If you want to access the system to review reports, pictures, etc., which happens on our website (About the Commission>Commission Login), please email me and I'll send you the new login and password. This is NOT the DMS; no access changes are taking place there.

On the other end, the demand and usage of our online Geographic Information System continues to grow. We are working with our consultant Jillian Reiner to figure out what additional capacity and support we need to keep that system healthy and useful, which will likely increase the cost relatively affordably. This system has proven useful for developing regional system analysis, providing system information to partners, and more. We will let you know when we have a solution to report.

Finally, we are already using the new DMS user interface and updated tools developed by the Full Circle Group during this phase. Testing and debugging continues, as with any update. I think the main thing remaining is an update and testing for a new newsletter system that allows us to push more to our users, rather than forcing them to sign up to receive updates (which is still an option).