



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Four Season Shelter - Robbins Island Regional Park

Willmar, MN

Minutes for March 22, 2023

APPROVED

Commissioners Present: Rick Anderson, Barry Wendorf, Bryan Pike, Tom Stoa, Jen Foley, Brad Bonk, Jonathan Wolf, Peg Furshong, Reid Huttunen, Beth Pierce (virtual)

Commissioners Absent: Tim Engrav

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

1. Call to Order – Chair Anderson 10:04

Meeting Goals are to be efficient and timely.

2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance:

Mark Lohmeier (virtual) Land Commissioner Hubbard County will review plan for Deep Lake Park, Curt Hein, virtual, Lee Gansky (virtual)– getting a sense for the work and may be interested in applying for position. Brandon Wagen, virtual, college student interested in trail planning.

3. Welcome by Rob Baumgarn, Willmar Parks and Recreation Director:

Robbins Island Park is a long term project with many twists and turns, personal change-over and funding. The Lake was not clean from nearby railroads usage but has been dredged. Now used for music concerts, fishing, and water recreation.

4. Approval of Agenda for March 22, 2023, Minutes from January 25, 2023, and Treasurer's Report through January 2023

Motion by Pike to approve the minutes and treasurer's report

Second by Furshong

Motion Approved

5. Executive Director's Report

- Legislative Update – Despite our best efforts over the last two months it has not been productive in the legislature for \$1 million dollars for our operating budget, we could

not get a hearing in the House. Two grant extensions are moving along. 2019 Legacy funding for FY2021 was reduced due to COVID and we were made whole the next year. However, we were notified by DNR that there is a balance of \$1.3 million related to that grant year and we are seeking an extension of those funds

Fergus Falls entered a late bill asking for the \$700,000 for development of part of the Glacial Trail. This was part of a funding application from the city last year, but it was disqualified due to the land not being in city ownership and a non-compliant resolution.

6. System Plan Coordinator's Report

Spring tour will be done instead of District workshops or meetings. We will meet with designation eligible facilities that have not yet completed a qualified Master Plan, as well as facilities that have not submitted grant requests.

Update on Evaluation Team replacements/alternates – had one inquiry with a trail background. Send anyone interested to Joe.

7. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission

Bonk – Finished the new visitor center at Brophy Park. Meeting Tuesday and has paved portions of trail near park and had lots of input.

Furshong- Nothing

Pike - Lake Shore (Gull Lake Trail) received bids for the trail construction and moving forward.

Huttunen -Red Lake River Corridor in Crookston going forward.

Wendorf– Spoke with Parks and Recreation Director for Monticello and they are applying for regional designation. Two of our designated trails should receive MNDOT funding.

Stoa – Hiked up to ice climbing wall along with people from the Twin Cities

Jonathon - Lake Wobegon Trail Marathon

Pierce– Mesabi trail almost complete. Club Mesabi is hiring an Executive Director. Position notice will be posted on the GMRPTC blog.

Anderson - Push to work on a trail along 75 and working on regional trail plan.

8 New Business:

8.1 Designation Application 22-015D Chisholm Redhead Mountain Bike Trails

1225 acre Special Feature ranked high. 25 miles competed but no master plan yet.

Motion by Pike to accept ETeams high rank for the Chisholm Redhead Mountain Bike Trails

Second by Bonk

Motion Approved

8.2 Designation Application 22-016D Great Northern Trail

ETeam rated high but require a qualified MOU. Track system worked well. 29.5 miles of paved trail. Joint application between three counties. Concern if trail developed are they going to be added as big potential for large loop. Yet challenged by land acquisition and the need to build consensus for regional trails.

Motion by Bonk to accept the ETeams high rank for the Great Northern Trail.

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

8.3 Master Plan for 22-008D Hubbard County Deep Lake Park

439 Acre Natural Resource Based Park, score 371.25

Application was returned and improved in areas requested

Motion by Pike to accept Hubbard Deep Lake Park as a designated facility.

Second by Furshong

Motion Approved

8.4 Equipment Loan Program for Greater Minnesota

Duluth, as an example, bought bikes and a trailer to get to underserved areas.

Discussion included insurance risk, equipment movement, staffing, possible fees, and transportation for families to get to facility.

Motion by Bonk to designate \$200,000 for an Equipment Loan program in Greater Minnesota

Second by Furshong

Motion Approved

8.5 Art in the Parks Program

Cecily Harris assistance approval for up to \$2,000

Motion by Furshong to approve getting proposal from Harris

Second by Bonk

Motion Approved

Election of a Secretary/Treasurer to replace Commissioner Pike

Motion by Wendorff to appoint Furshong as Secretary/Treasurer

Second by Bonk

Motion Approved

Election for At Large Position on the Executive Committee

Motion by Pike to appoint Wendorf for the At Large Position

Second by Bonk

Motion Approved

9. Old Business:

9.1 Funding Application Guidelines and Criteria Update for 2023

9.2 Funding Application Portal Instructions Update for 2023

Motion by Foley to accept (9.1 and 9.2) Funding Application Guidelines and Criteria Updates, and Funding Application Portal Instructions for 2023.

Second by Pike

Motion Approved

9.3 Work Plan for 2023 continued discussion.

During summer site visits, staff will inquire why, if projects are not moving along,

and what are the stumbling blocks. Also, let them know a timeline exists to complete projects or they run the risk of becoming undesignated. Is three years enough time to submit a Master Plan and if not, they can re-apply. They are responsible to let us know what their intentions are. Discussion as to how/when to un-designate a project. Renee and Joe will provide a list of those who are in this category and have not submitted a Master Plan.

Motion by Bonk that after designation, applicants have three years to submit a qualified Master Plan

Second by Wolf

Motion Approved

10. Approval of February and March 2023 Expenses

February Commissioners \$ 2,615.87

Consultants \$49,191.76

Total \$51,807.63

Motion by Foley to accept the February and March expenses

Second by Furshong

Motion Approved

11. Next Meeting and Agenda

No meeting in April

Meeting adjourned

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

Partner Meetings

- GMPT Newsletter Articles
- PTLAC Liaison's Calls
- GMPT Membership Committee

Legislative Meetings

Legislative meetings with:

- Rep. Kozlowski
- Rep. Backer x 2
- Rep. Pfarr
- Rep. Cha
- Rep. Heintzeman
- Rep. Hussein
- Rep. Lillie x 2
- Rep. Newton
- Senator Wesenberg
- Senator Green
- Senator Hawj
- Senator Hoffman
- Senator Maye Quade

I still have not been successful in getting a meeting with Rep. Hansen to request a hearing on our bill to fund our operating budget, but I continue to call and lurk about his office. The GMP&T has issued an action alert for members to contact the Representatives on the committee to urge them to push for a hearing. I'm working on all angles to have House members push for a hearing as well, including a meeting with Rep. Lillie to ask for him to put in a personal request to Rep. Hansen. We have few days remaining to get the bill on the agenda.

GMP&T Legislative Action Day February 1

The meeting was held in the Capital and pretty well attended in person and virtually. They arranged for DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen, Assistant Commissioner Shannon Lotthammer and Parks and Trails Director Ann Pierce to present to the group. Interesting discussion with them, and always good to have them together to speak. As well they had the Grants Staff, Audrey Mularie, Dan Golner and a new hire, whose name escapes me, talk to the group about their granting programs, how they differ and when the deadlines are. I talked about our process for designation and the 2022 Policy and Planning Report.

House Legacy Committee Presentation February 8

We had our time at the House Legacy Committee chaired by Rep. Lillie. As I've mentioned previously, only two of the members have served on the committee before, so a lot of our time was spent on background. The presentation was with our partners at DNR and Metropolitan Regional Parks. Chair Anderson also attended on behalf of the Commission. We had the entire

agenda for our presentation and had a lot of really good questions. I felt it went well and have been able to meet with all the committee members with the exception of Rep. Lee who I just cannot connect with.

Duluth and St. Louis County Days at the Capital February 8-9

This joint event is always a good opportunity to meet with legislators and their staff in a social setting. This year drew record attendance from both legislators and staff. At least four of the House Legacy Committee members were there (may have been more, but these four I was able to talk to) as well as a lot of the newly elected legislators.

Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee February 23

This meeting was virtual due to a snowstorm. We still struggle to find a path to work with the Minnesota Arts Board to do a joint Art in the Park program, so the focus has shifted to doing a program with just Parks and Trails and using the Coordinating Among Partners dollars to fund the work. There are several open seats on the Committee due to early resignations, look for a call to get involved in the near future. We are discussing what an extended contract would look like for a Streetlight 2.0 research project.

Testimony at Senate Environment, Climate and Legacy February 28

We were able to get time at the Senate Environment, Climate and Legacy Committee in the Senate to testify on SF527, to appropriate \$1 million from the General Fund for the Commission operating budget. In addition to me, former Commissioner for District 1, Tim Kennedy testified. Tim spoke about the needs in Greater Minnesota, I gave Commission background. The bill was passed on for consideration in the budget. But again, without a hearing in the House, we won't be successful.

Testimony at Senate Environment, Climate and Legacy March 16 & 17

The March 16 testimony was to support the request by St. Cloud to extend the Beaver Island Trail grant two more years. Senator Putnam is the author of the bill.

The March 17 testimony was our joint Parks and Trails presentation. Due to being the last presentation of the day, as well as virtually all the testifiers going way too long, we had only five minutes to do our 15 minute presentation. And being the last of all the presenters I had about 45 seconds to do our part. In the end, while it was unfortunate that we were shortchanged on the chance to tell our story, the bill was laid over and moves along.

Legacy House Committee March 17

This meeting conflicted with the Senate Environment, Climate and Legacy meeting. The meeting included the bill to fund the Glacial Edge Trail with a \$700,000 direct appropriation, circumventing our process. Reviewing the video from the meeting later, the bill was laid over, and testimony from Senator Backer was misleading. More on this at the March Commission meeting.

Parks and Trails Liaison Meeting March 3

Discussion around updating the MN Great Outdoors Website, this project has been languishing at MNIT and MNGEO for several months. In addition to necessary updates to the backend, there is an urgent need for a refresh and some additional attributes to the site. Art in the Parks work discussion, how to distribute the funds from Coordinating Among Partners, discussion about hiring an additional staff person to move some projects along that Lars has been unable to get done.

American Society of Landscape Architects Convention Presentation

IMBA has submitted a proposal to the ASLA to present a program about the new Mountain Bike Development Guidelines manual. IMBA Director of Planning and Design, Mike Repyak, along with Aaron Rogers of Rock Solid Trail Contracting and I would be conducting a joint program if our proposal is accepted. The convention is being held in Minneapolis October 27-30 and would be a great boost for publicity about the guide.

International Trails Summit-PTBA

IMBA will be presenting a program on the Trail Development Guidelines at the International Trails Summit-PTBA in Reno the week of April 17. They've asked us if we would like to co-present with them.

Equipment Lending Program in Greater Minnesota

We had a call for creative thinkers in the most recent issue of the GMP&T newsletter. We're looking for some of our more imaginative parks and trails folks to help design an equipment lending program for Greater Minnesota. This comes out of a discussion I had with Rep. Kaohly Vang Her at Duluth and St. Louis County Days. Rep. Her is an outdoor enthusiast from the metro and feels more could be done to get people outdoors if access to equipment was more readily available. There is a group of four volunteer/recruits, along with Joe and I hoping to find some good ideas about how a program of this kind would be implemented.

GMRPTC
System Plan Coordinators Report
March 2023

Reviews and ETeam

As noted in the last report, the following facilities have completed their ETeam review and will be discussed at this month's Commission meeting:

Designation Applications (Ranking Review):

22-015D Chisholm Redhead Mountain Bike Trails

22-016D Sherburne County + collaboration Great Northern Trail

Master Plans (Scoring and Grading Review):

22-008D Hubbard County Deep Lake Park

Hubbard County completed updates to the Maintenance and Operations section, which resulted in the ETeam raising the grade to a passing "B". That Master Plan now goes to the Commission for consideration. The Great Northern Trail still has some work to do on an updated Memorandum of Understanding. They hope to move through that process with all their partners so that Master Plan can be eligible for your final review early this summer.

Technical Assistance

Several of our regional and local partners have reached out for various levels of technical assistance by phone, Zoom and email. Some facilities are already starting to prepare funding applications or had questions about previous grant awards, while others are starting to ramp up Master Plan efforts. Facilities that required notable assistance included Warroad Point Park, Brainerd Northland Arboretum, Prairie's Edge Nature Center, Fertile Sandhill Nature Center, Frazee Wannigan Park, Winona Bluffs Traverse, Marshall County Florian Park and Trail, and the Fergus Falls/Otter Tail County Glacial Edge Trail.

Funding

Funding application and support materials have been updated to reflect the Commission's directions from the January meeting. We have a full package ready for your approval at the March meeting, in time for the April 3 launch. I am also working on an updated tutorial video. Having an opportunity to speak plainly on video to our applicants can be a helpful tool with so many new items in this year's funding guidance, particularly the opportunity to fund environmental review work.

We are working with the three selected track chair applicants to complete detailed implementation plans for the grant. This plan will be on paper, but in the future they will be able to use the new "survey" function in the DMS to complete those plans, making it easier on everyone.

District and Partner Outreach

Renee and I have started to schedule our facility routing lists for the April-June spring tour, as discussed at the January meeting. We won't be able to get to all of the 130 or so facilities on our opportunity list but are going to focus on new, up and coming, or non-communicative facilities that could use a more personal touch. In addition to Commission participation in those visits, we have invited the ETeam to join us when they are available.

I also participated in a GMPT Legislative Forum, a great way to stay in touch with our partners and keep abreast of new legislative initiatives or opportunities that may not have otherwise come to light.

Consultant Projects

DMS updates with Full Circle Group are nearing completion. We have started testing some of the updates and hope to present you with some of the results at a future meeting.