



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Sartell Community Center

Sartell, MN

Minutes for May 24, 2023

APPROVED

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

Commissioners Absent: Tim Engrav and Jonathan Wolf

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

- 1. Call to Order – Chair Anderson at 9:04am**
- 2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance** - none in attendance.
- 3. Approval of Agenda for May 24, Minutes from March 22, 2023 and Treasurer’s Report through March 2023.**
Motion by Wendorf to accept the May 24 Agenda, March 22, 2023 Minutes and Treasurer’s Report through March 2023.
Second by Foley
Motion Approved

9:29am meeting paused to allow Commission to attend a Webinar

- 4. Trail-Specific Findings - Statewide Park and Trail Research Webinar**
9:30 AM – 10:38 am. Online event featuring Raven McKnight, Associate Data Scientist Metropolitan Council and Ellen Esch, Data Scientist Metropolitan Council. Day three of a four-day webinar series. Commissioner Stoa left the meeting to attend the webinar from his computer and rejoined when presentation concluded. At 10:15 the question and answer session began, and commissioners asked follow-up questions. Furshong inquired about data available regarding seasonal park use.

10:39am meeting called back to order

5. Executive Director's Report

The Mountain Bike Trail Development Guide launched at a Capitol press event on May 15. Thanks to Commissioners Anderson, Foley and Wolf for their attendance at the event as well as Czapiewski. GMP&T also had members in attendance, Brad Harrington, Gina Hugo, and Karlin Ziegler, as well as Flaherty & Hood staff Elizabeth Wefel and Alex Wildfang. As of July 1, 2023, the per diem for Commissioners is increased from \$55 per meeting to \$125 per meeting. This is a legislative change that affects several entities. There is also a statutory change in our enabling legislation to allow Tribal governments to apply for funding as well as a directive to work cooperatively with non-profit organizations. We will need to address these directives and provide information as to how this will work within our structure. Discussion regarding current and future funding.

6. System Plan Coordinator's Report

Good meetings with designated facilities from whom we have not had contact recently. Inflation is still causing budgeting issues. Should applicants facing extreme inflationary costs be allowed to apply for additional funding? Discussion regarding a supplemental fund to draw from, but what about matches?

7. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission

Foley, Huttunen, Furshong, Stoa, Pike-Nothing to report

Bonk- Met with Rob Baumgarn, Parks Director in Willmar who asked for help starting a funding application for their planned amphitheater in Robbins Island Park.

Pierce – Biwabik is planning to apply for a trail designation, with links to Giants Ridge and a trailhead.

Wendorf– Hosted the 6th annual disk golf tournament at Springvale County Park , 90 players, with a top score from a player from Sioux Falls, so definitely a regional event. A PDGA sanctioned event. Had great feedback on the course and the event.

Anderson – Casey Jones Trail got \$1.25 million in bonding for rehab on the trail.

8. New Business:

8.1 Executive Director Contract Renewal

Discussion about succession of Executive Director and System Plan Coordinators positions. Mattson will work four more years in two, two-year contracts if approved. The organization has grown and may need more staff and positions will continue to evolve.

Motion by Stoa to approve a new, two-year contract for Mattson, from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025

Second by Wendorf

Motion Approved

Lunch break- 11:45 am to 12:17pm

8.2 Great Northern Trail 22-016D Designation Review

Park/Trail Type: Multi-jurisdictional Trail in Districts: 1 and 4.

Classification: Regional Trail (Motorized and Non-motorized)

Regional Designation Status: Undesignated.

Location Description The Great Northern Trail is a 30-mile rails-to-trails project located within the Great Northern Railroad alignment between Elk River and Milaca. It will provide an important regional connection between the Mississippi River Regional Trail and the planned Ports to Plains Trail, creating a 100+ mile loop between the cities of St. Cloud, Elk River, and Milaca.

Joint application with Sherburne and Mille Lacs counties and cities contained within.

The E Team ranked B for content with a score of 368.

Alternate routes are included in the event of land ownership issues with old railroad land. All segments listed are for future builds along with two completed segments not numbered. Awaiting information on another potential segment. Staff site visit completed. Discussion included long term maintenance plans.

Motion by Bonk to designate the Great Northern Trail

Second by Furshong

Motion Approved

8.3 St. Louis County Fiscal Agent Contract for a term from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2027

Motion by Bonk to approve a contract with St. Louis County with the same 3% fee

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

9. Old Business:

9.1 Art in the Parks Program

Mattson stated there is about \$600,000 in coordination among partners funds for this program but still some details to work out. Looks like an artist in residence program in all three systems, with two parks in each system for a total of six artists. Furshong offered to spearhead committee to discuss the funds to be shared among a variety of artists instead of residency program receiving it all. Maybe have one project in each of the six districts. Maybe get local matches if it would work with timelines and funding or try to leverage funding to get additional Anderson suggested perhaps split into regions as we did with track chairs.

Motion by Pierce to move forward with our share of the funds, from the PTLAC and we would work the project with Commissioner Furshong spearheading it.

Second by Bonk

Motion Approved

9.2 Increased mileage rate for handicap vehicles.

An additional .9 cents per mile is authorized to be added to the .655 per diem rate for a total of .745 for this meeting and moving forward.

Motion by Wendorf to approve mileage rate hike for handicap vehicles.

Second by Furshong

Motion approved

9.3 Commissioner Furshong requesting change. Due to a busy schedule would like to remain as the At-Large representative on the Executive Committee, and withdraw from the recent change to Secretary/Treasurer. Commissioner Wendorf would be willing to take on the role of Secretary/Treasurer.

Motion by Pierce to make the change

Second by Anderson

Motion Approved.

10. Approval of April and May 2023 Expenses

Consultants April	\$ 44,685.44
Consultants May	\$ 34,571.68
Commission May	<u>\$ 2,012.68</u>
TOTAL	\$81,269.80

Motion by Bonk to approve April and May Expenses

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

11. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

June 28, 2023 in East Grand Forks

Adjourn 1:09 pm

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

Partner Meetings

- GMPT Newsletter Article
- PTLAC Liaison's Calls
- GMPT Membership Committee
- GMPT Communications Committee
- University of Minnesota Tourism Center – scheduling a meeting for touching base
- Outdoor Recreation Industry Partnership – scheduling a meeting with the new director of this new initiative; DNR, DEED, Explore Minnesota and IRRR.

Stakeholder Calls/Meetings

- Robbins Island Park – call with committee to further discuss the Willmar Rotary Club's assistance in funding the amphitheater project. Looks like the city will be moving ahead with a funding request for the amphitheater.
- Duluth – mobile mountain bike fleet public announcement
- City of Columbus – help using the master plan portal for a city wide park plan
- City of Red Wing – Phase 2 improvements and bid issues (over budget)
- City of Big Falls – Picnic in the Park planning for the city and SHPO

Mountain Bike Trail Development Guide

The launch of this LONG awaited guide has happened! On Monday, May 15 we hosted a press conference at the Capitol to announce the guide. Special thanks to Commissioners Anderson, Foley and Wolf for making the trip to the event. It was great to see the representation. And a special thanks also to Joe who jumped in to the role of facilitator for the on-line media. It's truly been a group effort to get this project over the finish line. As you're all aware, the Star Tribune picked up the story and ran it on their website on Sunday, May 14 and the front page on Monday, May 15. We continue to monitor the various media outlets for stories about the guide. We are already getting requests for copies and have been handing them out as we do site visits. There has been a good deal of positive feedback already. Copies will be available at the Wednesday meeting.

I've been compiling the guide expenses and will have a final recap available for you all in another week or two.

St. Louis County Fiscal Agent Contract

In the materials sent out last week the new fiscal agent agreement with St. Louis County was included. It's the same as the previous contract, with 3% being charged to take care of our expenses. We will have the ability to add revenue to our account when we start to sell the equipment we accumulated for virtual meetings, prior to finding the amazing OWL.

Additionally, if we sell copies of the mountain bike guide to entities outside of Minnesota we can add that revenue to our account.

Streetlight Research Project

This two year location based data research project is coming to a conclusion. There has been discussion with Raven McKnight about continuing on with the project, as had been requested after a previous Commission meeting. All three partners are interested in more reporting and gaining additional insight about visitation and demographics in park visits. At this time nothing has been agreed upon, but discussion is happening.

I've had questions from various stakeholders and some Commissioners about whether the webinars will be recorded and available to view at a later time. We are working on a website that will host the research data as well as the webinars. That site should be complete in a few weeks and we will make the link widely available.

We had the opportunity to review and comment on the final version of the report and both Joe and I had a few comments to add. This version is what will be reviewed in the webinars and posted on the website.

Art in the Parks Program

This initiative continues to evolve as a Coordination Among Partners project. Currently the model is an artist in residency year long program. We will discuss this in more detail at the meeting.

GMRPTC
System Plan Coordinators Report
May 2023

Reviews

Renee and I completed the site review for the Great Northern Trail. It was well organized by Sherburne County, with appropriate local officials joining us at each community. The required joint operating MOU has been completed by the agency and is being uploaded to the portal – let me know if you want me to send you a copy if it's not there yet.

I also completed a formal site review for Fish Lake Park in Chisago County. We recently received the Designation Application and Master Plan for this facility, which will go to the ETeam next month. This is a very busy park with some interesting challenges, we look forward to an in-depth review by the ETeam.

Technical Assistance

Funding application questions are coming in regularly via phone, email, and Zoom. We are starting to get excited about the number of facilities that are considering applications this year, including a few agencies that have not applied in the past. The tutorial and support materials have been well received, which has helped move my TA discussions to the finer points of project scope and qualifications, as opposed to “how to” questions.

As noted above, we have received the application materials for Fish Lake Park in Chisago County. There are still a couple of other facilities that are trying to get their applications/plans submitted in time for an early June review, so I'm hopeful we will have a good list of facilities for you next month.

District and Partner Outreach

Renee and I have started the spring tour, which will continue as time permits for the foreseeable future. We are already learning a lot about our partner and potential partner facilities. Some of the great parts about our role are helping connect agencies with others who have dealt with similar challenges or opportunities, sharing our technical resources like the new mountain bike manual, and brainstorming for future enhancements or programming.

Renee and I participated in a very timely GMPT Forum about archeological/environmental project work. We briefly covered the new “environmental Review” funding opportunity within Greater Minnesota Legacy. The remainder of the session featured one of our Greater Minnesota archeological consultants who covered the environmental review process and why they do what they do. It was a very engaging and worthwhile forum.

I have started to work with Gina Hugo to put together a proposed breakout session on her experience at the Big Elk Lake Park for the fall APA conference, where Renee and I hope to also present on the GMRPTC story.

I also supported Renee with the Mountain Bike Trail Standards Manual press event in St. Paul. It was a great event that got decent coverage, and it was nice to meet with our partners on that project and think about next steps.

Consultant Projects

DMS updates with Full Circle Group are nearing completion. We are excited about the new technology for communicating with, reporting and tracking our partner contacts, as well as a few new other tools.

I've also been a little more involved in following and reviewing the final products for the Streetlight research project. Hopefully we all get a lot out of the webinar series being presented this week. I am receiving reports from our partner agencies that they are using this information in their own reports!