



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trail Commission

Law Enforcement Center - Moorhead

Minutes for April 27, 2022

APPROVED

Commissioners Present: Rick Anderson, Barry Wendorf, Bryan Pike, Jen Foley, Beth Peirce(Virtual), Tim Engrav, Brad Bonk, Jonathan Wolf, Ted Suss (virtual), Peg Furshong (virtual)

Commissioners Absent: Tom Ryan and Tom Stoa

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

1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Anderson at 10:01am

Meeting goals: To have a good and timely conversation.

2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance

Moorhead Mayor Shelly Carlson, Kristie Leshovsky, Moorhead Community Development Director, Forrest Steinhoff, Assistant City Planner, Holly Heitkamp, Parks and Recreation Director

Welcome by Mayor Shelly Carlson. Much going on in Moorhead and they are committed to the river corridor and access to the river. They have received Legacy funding for a number of their parks and trails improvements and are grateful.

3. Approval of Agenda for April 27, 2022, Minutes from March 23, 2022 and Treasurer's Report

Anderson - Agenda item on the campground survey will be chaired by Engrav due to a conflict of interest.

Motion by Engrav

Second by Wolf

Motion Approved

4. Executive Director's Report

Nothing to add except LCCMR is still stalled and there are good projects for a number of parks and trails that could benefit if a final recommendation is arrived at, including the Gull Lake Trail final segment.

5. System Plan Coordinator's Report

It has been a fantastic month with a good flow of information for Master Plans and Designations. There is definitely an uptick in designation applications. District 5

workshop was held Monday and was well attended, and preregistration numbers are ahead of last year's workshops which were held on Zoom. Encouraging discussion on how COVID impacted locations. Great comments from Henderson trail group. The remainder of the workshops will be held in May.

6. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission

Engrav - attended the Trails Task Force meeting, Mattson was there, thanked Beth for coordinating these meetings. Good representation for snowmobile and ATV trail groups. Heard about Streetlight data from Renee.

Foley - nothing

Furshong - nothing

Pierce - nothing

Bonk - a few emails and calls, but nothing major. Phelps Mill has been in contact.

Pike - What is happening with the appointment for the District 2 vacancy? Mattson said we are still waiting, has been in touch with the appointment's office. The same applications are in the system, but nothing new to report.

Suss - continuing to regularly engage with Sibley County Henderson group.

Wendorf - nothing

Wolf - nothing

Anderson - SRDC applied for \$200,000 grant for trails plan in SW corner of state from the EDA and was successful. Hopeful this will help the Casey Jones Trail move forward.

7. New Business:

7.1 System Plan Coordinator Contract Renewal

Contract proposal for an increase and the work plan makes appropriate changes to scope of work. Mattson recommends it be approved.

Commissioners had positive comments on Joe's work.

Year 1 \$7,000 to \$7,500 per month.

Year 2 \$7,500 to \$7,700 per month

Motion by Suss to renew System Plan Coordinators contract with the increase.

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

7.2 Contract with Karen Umphress Up! Outside

Mattson, Umphress has spent a long time in the industry and will take some work off of Joe's plate. She did the Mountain Bike Trails Inventory, cleaned up contacts and attended some meetings. Umphress is doing some site visits with Joe and Renee as a back-up to them. She is participating in the process to become more familiar in the event Mattson and Czapiewski are unable to be there. Fee \$75 per hour- very fair. Bonk likes her ability to represent off-highway motorized vehicle on trails. Commissioners' have had a good experience with her.

Motion by Bonk to approve the contract with Up! Outside.

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

10:48 Chair Anderson turned meeting over to Engrav to lead discussion on 7.3, campground survey 2022.

7.3 Campground Survey 2022 – Vendor Selection

Two responses to the RFP, Southwest Regional Development Commission and the University of Minnesota Tourism Center. SWRDC had a much lower proposal cost at \$22,077. The Tourism Center's bid was \$32,318.

Discussion about the merits of both proposals.

Motion by Bonk to accept the contract with SWRDC for the 2022 campground survey at a cost of \$22,077.

Second by Pike

Abstention by Anderson

Motion Approved with one abstention by Chair Anderson

10:56 Engrav turned the meeting back over to Anderson.

7.4 Designation Application Ranking Review

22-004D Sibley County Henderson Scenic Byway Trail

District 5 - Multi-Use Trail

Classification: Regional Trail (Motorized and Non-motorized).

Evaluation Team Ranking High

Regional Significance Statement - The Henderson Scenic Byway Regional Trail complex will be a county-owned, multi-use trail system of parks and trails extending from Henderson to Blakeley, to High Island and Rush River County Parks, and to the Ney Nature Center in Le Sueur County. Its multiple destinations and connections will have a significant economic and recreational impact on the region, including the historic Henderson community, the Twin Cities metro area and much of South-Central Minnesota.

Some policy questions directed to Commissioners.

This route is low and frequently floods and is being reconstructed and so want to add trail along with road construction. Very scenic trail and goes through historical city. But the length is an issue as trail only 7.2 miles and 10 miles is the minimum. Staff feel the proposed park connections do not add value to the trail connection at this time.

Motion by Pike to accept the high ranking for the Sibley County Henderson Scenic Byway Regional Trail from the Sibley Le Sueur County line up to the middle of the Blakely bridge.

Second by Anderson

Motion Approved

Motion by Bonk to accept the Evaluation Team score of 325 for the Sibley County Henderson Scenic Regional Trail from the Sibley Le Sueur County line up to the middle of the Blakely bridge.

Second Suss

Motion Approved

21-017D Brainerd Northland Arboretum

District 2 – Natural Resource Based Park

Evaluation Team Ranking Medium

Regional Significance Statement - The Northland Arboretum's 420 acres are conveniently located and provides needed greenspace for the growing Brainerd Lakes community. It holds important habitats and demonstrates ecological goals

while providing high-quality nature observation. It is a designated bird area, a trailhead to Paul Bunyan State Trail, the homebase for several nature-based organizations (Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, etc.), manages a 12-mile trail system and visitor center. 25,000 annual visits share in high-quality educational programming, conservation efforts, events, and recreational opportunities. Evaluation Team could not find a way to make it fit. The concern for this park is the split in ownership and management between multiple organizations. Only 80 acres is county land and available for Legacy funding. This is complicated and will be difficult to sustain.

Motion by Bonk to accept the Medium Ranking for the Crow Wing County Northland Arboretum

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

22-003D Otter Tail County Echo Bay Park

District 3 – Natural Resource Based Park

Evaluation Team Ranking Medium

Regional Significance Statement - Echo Bay County Park expands Otter Tail County's county park system by offering unique recreational opportunities in a high-quality natural setting along Fish Lake and the Pelican River. Low impact and conservation-minded amenities include hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country ski trails; fishing and observation piers; accessible picnic areas and shelters; nature play area; and hike-in tent camping. Prairie, scrub savanna, and wetland restorations improve habitats, pollinator resources, watershed quality, site ecology, and user experience. The protection of the shoreline and resources are a positive for this park. More information on how the easements impact future development opportunities is needed. The information given does not appear to rise to the level of regional significance, within the context of the region.

Motion by Pike to accept the Medium Ranking for Otter Tail County Echo Bay Park

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

15-009D Isanti County Springvale Park Master Plan

District 4 – Natural Resource Based Park

Evaluation Team Score 375

Description - Set within a landscape of rolling hills, savanna, wetlands, hardwood forest, and conifer stands, Springvale Park's mix and diversity of biological communities is reflective of its location at a crossroads between the state's major ecotypes. Uniquely located at the boundary of the Anoka Sand Plain and Mille Lacs Upland, Springvale possesses some of the region's highest quality areas for habitat, viewing native wildlife, and engaging in outdoor recreation.

Motion by Engrav to accept the Evaluation Team score of 375 for the Isanti County Springvale Park.

Second by Wolf

Motion Approved

21-006D Frazee Wannigan Park

District 3 – Natural Resource Based Park

Evaluation Team Score 392.5

Description – Wannigan Regional Park will be a nature based park that will serve as a trailhead for three unique recreational trails of statewide/national significance: 1. Otter Tail River State Water Trail – a designated canoe and kayak route; 2. The Heartland State Trail Extension – a multi-use non-motorized trail; and 3. The North Country National Scenic Trail, a hiking trail. It will offer much needed camping, performance and gathering spaces, onsite trails and an interpretive center in a natural setting.

Much discussion by Commissioners about the operating agreement of the non-profit committee. The agreement needs to be with the city or county, cannot be with the non-profit entity. More information is needed before a designation can be made.

Motion by Pike to not designate Frazee Wannigan Park at this time.

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

19-022D Warroad Point Park

District 2 – Special Feature

Evaluation Team Score 427.5

Description – Warroad Point Park in Warroad is the only American port on Lake of the Woods. Lake of the Woods is the primary destination for lake related natural outdoor recreation experience in Northwest Minnesota, a region with limited lake resources. World class fishing, numerous islands, and the overall size of the lake make it a crown-jewel outdoor recreation destination for people from the Upper Midwest, all of Minnesota, the U.S., Canada, and all over the world.

Motion by Pike to designate Warroad Point Park and accept the Evaluation Team Score of 427.5

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

16-009D Fergus Falls/Otter Tail County Glacial Edge Trail Update

District 3 – Regional Trail

Evaluation Team Score of 355, previous score of 339.58

The Glacial Edge Trail has regional significance as a planned 28-mile regional destination trail in west central Minnesota that will extend the existing Central Lakes State Trail (55-mile trail from Osakis to Fergus Falls) north to Maplewood State Park through the City of Fergus Falls and Otter Tail County. The Glacial Edge Trail will connect to the planned Pelican Rapids to Perham Regional Trail and ultimately to Maplewood State Park.

Motion by Bonk to accept the new score and the new segments for the Fergus Falls/Otter Tail County Glacial Edge Trail of 355 from the previous score of 339.58

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

15-020D Olmsted County Oxbow Park & Zollman Zoo Update

District 6 – Natural Resource Based Park

Evaluation Team Score of 427.5, previous score of 432.25

Oxbow Park is a 622 acre county park located in west-central Olmsted County. The park is near Rochester and Byron, and County Road 105 NW runs through it. The

South Branch Middle Fork of the Zumbro River winds through the park. Due to annual flooding, they are moving the road and campground to higher ground. Regional Significance Statement: The size and scope of the Zollman Zoo, the programming associated it, surrounded by a natural resource-based park facility, allows this park to stand out among regional parks. Its proximity to a substantial population base in the greater Rochester area, and only an hour's ride from the Metropolitan solidifies its definition as a Special Recreational Feature Regional Park.

Location Description:

Motion by Anderson to accept the new score of 427.5, from 432.25, and other additions and changes to the Master Plan for the Olmsted County Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo.

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

15-019D Olmsted County Chester Woods Park

District 6 – Natural Resource Based Park

Evaluation Team Score of 448.75, previous score of 416

Location Description: Chester Woods Park is located seven miles east of Rochester, MN on US Highway 14 in Marion and Eyota Townships, Olmsted County.

Designated Regional Significance Statement: Olmsted County is one of only four counties in Minnesota that does not have a natural lake within its boundary, highlighting the importance of the reservoir as a great resource for Southeastern Minnesota. The 118 acres of Chester Lake provides a recreational facility for greater Minnesota and neighboring states and is the largest, natural resource-based park within 30 miles of Rochester's core.

Motion by Bonk accept the upgraded Master Plan score of 448.75 from the previous score of 416 for Olmsted County Chester Woods Park.

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

8. Approval of April 2022 Expenses

Consultant Expenses: \$55,462.21

Commission Expenses: \$ 1,930.88

Total of \$57,393.09

Mattson, one note on the consultant expenses, the second half of the Full Circle Group Phase V, invoice of \$26,100 is included.

Motion by Engrav to accept the expenses for April 2022

Second by Bonk

Motion Approved

9. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

June meeting to be held in Redwing

10. Meeting Adjourned at 1:48 pm

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission
Director's Report for April 2022

Partner Meetings

- GMPT article for monthly newsletter
- GMPT Communication Committee
- PTLAC Liaison's Call
- PTALC Call with Sue Gens, Minnesota State Arts Board

Evaluation Team

Calls with the Evaluation Team on April 8 and April 21 to discuss the MANY designation applications and master plans.

Site Visits

April 12-13

Isanti County Springvale Park

Sibley County Henderson Scenic Byway Regional Trail

Otter Tail County/Fergus Falls Glacial Edge Trail

April 18 – Warroad Point Park

District Workshops

District 5 Springfield on April 25

Mountain Bike Standards Manual

This past month has been finalizing the photos for the manual, final review of the content before the draft goes to the committee for final review and creating a media release plan to gain wide recognition and interest. Aaron Rogers of Rock Solid and I have discussed ways to promote the manual outside both of our areas of interest. We feel IMBA approval and support would be helpful to ensure widespread distribution. IMBA did provide feedback and edits during the review process so we're hopeful they will want to put their stamp on it in some way.

Summer Surveys

Working with Parks and Trails Council to finalize the plans for this summer's three system surveys. Also working with the respondents for the Campground Survey to ensure their questions are answered.

GMRPTC
System Plan Coordinators Report
April 2022

CPO Small Grant Fund

As expected, inquiries into this fund have increased as the deadline approaches. We have received our first submission (D5)! A follow-up email was sent to all designated facilities along with a reminder about workshop registrations. The deadline for this fund application is May 31.

FY24 Funding Application

So far two funding applications have actually been started in the DMS – we are well ahead of the usual pace! Based on the number of inquiries and discussions I've had, particularly with the submitted Master Plans listed below, we might feel optimistic that it could be a good class year for funding applications.

Reviews and Technical Assistance

Staff and the ETeam have completed the appropriate evaluations of the following, which will be brought to you for discussion and approval at this meeting:

Designation Application 21-019D, Sibley County Henderson Trail

Designation Application 21-017D Crow Wing County Northland Arboretum

Designation Application 22-003D Otter Tail County Echo Bay Park

Master Plan 22-004D Sibley County Henderson Scenic Byway Trail (site visit conducted)

Master Plan 15-009D Isanti County Springvale Park (site visit conducted)

Master Plan 21-006D Frazee Wannigan Park (site visit scheduled)

Master Plan 19-022D Warroad Point Park (site visit conducted)

Master Plan 16-009D Fergus Falls/Otter Tail County Glacial Edge Trail (Update, site visit conducted)

Master Plan 15-020D Olmsted County Oxbow Park & Zollman Zoo (Update, site visit pending)

Master Plan 15-019D Olmsted County Chester Woods Park (Update, site visit pending)

To complete this evaluation cycle, the ETeam actually met three times – once to train on the new Master Plan and Track 2 Evaluation modules, and twice to get through the large amount of materials under review. All meetings were conducted by Zoom. We can't tell you how fantastic their work was this month, as they were given a much larger task than we anticipated when we set up the first meeting. They are troopers! And FYI, we already have a list of new apps and plans that have been submitted for the next review round – we just had to draw the line somewhere!

We have continued extensive technical assistance with these and other applications/plans in the works, including Hubbard County and McLeod County in particular. Activity points to a notable uptick in potential designations in 2022, compared to the previous couple of years.

Consulting Team Capacity Building

In an effort to expand our capacity and solidify our team, we asked consultant Karen Umphress to provide a new proposal. We know she is a good fit and recommend approval of her contract to take over regular website maintenance (not including DMS), working with our regional partners to enter and maintain data on the MN Great Outdoors website, and start the process of participating in and learning about what we do on site visits (limited engagement for now). All of these items will help to reduce both of our workloads and build some capacity for the future.

Data Management System Phase V Updates

All major tasks for this phase have been completed. Only continued maintenance items remain, as well as identifying and fixing any bugs that pop up. Many thanks to the folks at Full Circle Group for helping us

complete the long list of items in this phase, which we showcased much of to the Commission at last month's meeting.

District Workshops and Outreach

All district workshops are scheduled, advertised, and are taking registrations! In fact, the first one was held Monday in District 5 – Springfield with 10 attendees! Right now they look like they will all be at least as well attended as the Zoom workshops last year – and likely better. The main topics at this workshop include an overview of Commission planning and outcomes (funded projects), a group discussion of COVID impacts, a run-through of the numerous Commission initiatives that give back to our applicants (it's a long list!), and advice for this year's funding applicants. Hope to see you all there!

I am also working with GMPT to present at a future forum regarding Master Planning. Don't know when or what it will look like just yet, but it's a good opportunity to reach new audiences (if the regulars aren't sick of me by then).