



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trail Commission

Sandstone City Hall
119 4th Street, Sandstone, MN 55072

Minutes for July 27, 2022

APPROVED

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

Commissioners Absent: Tom Ryan, Tim Engrav

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

- 1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Anderson at 10:02**
- 2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance**
No one from the public in attendance
- 3. Approval of Agenda for July 27, 2022, Minutes from June 22, 2022, and Treasurer’s Report through June 2022 (end of our fiscal year).**
Motion by Wendorf
Second by Wolf
Motion Approved
- 4. Executive Director’s Report**
Madelyn Nelson has left the appointments director job in the Governor’s office and we’re working with the interim person. An appointment is needed for District 2, which we’ve been waiting on for almost a year. Mattson has talked to Nelson and asked for the position to be filled soon.
- 5. System Plan Coordinator’s Report**
Tours related to designation applications have been done that relate to new funding applicants, so we only need to visit about half of total applications. Site tours are

currently being scheduled and Commissioners will be advised when schedules are set so you may attend these tours as your schedules permit.

6. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission

Bank – Perham to Pelican Rapids Trail is being paved.

Furshong – nothing

Pierce – city of Biwabik is working on a designation application for a park. The park would have mountain biking, hiking, snowshoeing and a connection to Giants Ridge.

Stoa – nothing

Suss – this is his last meeting and he has enjoyed serving on this Commission

Foley - nothing

Wolf – nothing

Pike- a little disappointed in delay of the appointment for District 2 Commissioner

Wendorf - nothing

Anderson - nothing

7. New Business:

7.1 Preview of FY24 Funding Applications

- 16 applications to date for FY24 Legacy grants, six are from facilities that have never applied before
- Robinson Quarry Park needs information entered as nothing is in portal yet
- Waabizheshikana/The Marten Trail application is not complete but estimate of \$1 million for the first phase
- Phelps Mill County Park – nothing in portal yet, not sure of the project
- Oxbow Park and Zollman Zoo– estimate of \$2 million for their campground project
- Greater Mankato River Valley Trail System – nothing in description and no project cost yet
- Total of approximately \$9 million that is currently entered in the system, closer probably to \$14 million when everything is in
- Detroit Mountain Recreation Area project – they are being gifted property for cross country ski trails and amenity upgrades as part of their request

7.2 Budget Review and Adjustments

- The fiscal year ended June 30 and we are just now getting into the grant for the first year of the two year biennium as related to reimbursements, so we do have ample cushion for projects.
- Consultants' costs have increased but we do have Karen and Jillian on board and available to help with projects. As the system has grown, it's become necessary to find additional support.

- Website hosting and Maintenance costs increased last year but are not expected to increase this year. The increase was largely due to the amount of storage we need due to the size of the files we store on the system.
- Fiscal agent funding fee up due to incorrect billing last year.
- Marketing this year anticipated to be \$20,000.

Motion by Wolf to approve the FY2023 budget as presented

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

7.3 Track Chair – Action Manufacturing

Czapiewski – this brand of All-Terrain Wheelchair has been in existence for some time and they are easily operated. The track chairs allow people to access trails that they would not normally be able to with a standard wheelchair. They also allow better access to unpaved trails. Some State parks are acquiring and making them available, about 15-20 chairs to date. Czapiewski, Mattson and Bonk were at a GMPT meeting and were able to try the chairs and are very impressed with the stability. The company that manufactures them is out of Marshall. Mattson stated we may want to consider a pilot project with the chairs and use the \$14,000+ that is available from the CPO Small Grant Fund.

A discussion included logistics, how the chairs would be transported and shared, who would pay for maintenance, and is there a need for insurance and or waivers for protection. A facility would own the chair and storage, staffing and a reservation system would be needed and there will be no charge for use. Other comments included – track chairs might be a good addition for annual events in parks, Mountain Bike trails might not be wide enough for track chairs, and is a definition of “disability” required for use as not all handicaps are visible.

Mattson stated this is a pilot project for those interested to try them out prior to applying for funds. We would need to advertise to let people know where the chairs will be. She also stated we have \$14,000+ remaining and that is the approximate cost of the chairs.

Mattson and Czapiewski, with review and input by Bonk, will, and present a proposal to the Commission at the August meeting.

7.4 Additional Funding for Campground Survey

Some facilities are doing well in survey collection and other not so well due to lack of staffing and no centralized location. Mattson requests an additional \$3,600 for 40 hours to spend more time at Memorial Park, Hole in the Mountain and Ramsey parks. A discussion included why are some so low on the surveys? Could incentives help

for those taking the surveys such as ice cream or pop? The survey takes three to four minutes. If SWRDC staff can be on site to do the surveys, we will have better information.

Motion by Pike to approve \$3,600 for additional survey support by the SWRDC

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

8. Old Business:

- Seven seats will be open for re-appointment in January of 2023. There is a new appointments director and we're hopeful that we won't have such a long delay in reappointments or new appointments.
- Pike may choose not to apply for reappointment.

9. Approval of July Expenses

Consultant expenses	\$22,490.28
<u>Commission expenses</u>	<u>\$1,351.88</u>
TOTAL	\$23,842.16

Motion by Bonk

Second by Wendorf

Motion Approved

10. Next Meeting and Agenda Items:

August 24 at Sherburne History Center in Becker

Following the meeting will be a tour of Big Elk Lake Park

Meeting adjourned at 11:33am

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

Partner Meetings

- GMPT article for monthly newsletter
- GMPT July Membership Meeting
- GMPT Membership Committee
- PTLAC Liaison's Calls
- Art in the Parks Call with MN State Arts Board and Liaisons

Site Visits

- July 11, grant close out visit to the Gull Lake Trail, Fairview Township section. Met with DNR Dan Golner and Marla Yoho from Fairview Township as well as their contract engineer and the construction manager on the project. The trail looks great and there were plenty of people using it. Project is closed out.
- July 15, Lake County Mountain Bike Trail Grand Opening

Mountain Bike Trail Count and User Survey Summer 2022

While at the Lake County Mountain Bike Trail grand opening, I had the opportunity to meet with Andrew Oftedal who is the lead for the mountain bike research as he was there to start the trail count for Lake County. The user count is high at Tioga but we're seeing very low numbers of trail users at Winona. The counters have been moved to different trail locations, but we haven't seen any significant increase in numbers. It will be interesting to learn more about the user surveys when they're complete. But, just like a heavily used trail gives us information, a trail with little use will provide information as well, and may guide us in making decisions about future investments in the trails.

Campground Survey Summer 2022

The campground survey is coming along and we're seeing good survey returns at some of the sites. The most recent survey count:

Campground	Full Capacity for 16 weeks	Current Response Rate	Desired Response Rate By End of Season	Number of Desired Responses by End of Season
Lake Washington	512	11%	20% (on track)	102
Hole in the Mountain	528	2%	10%	53
Garvin	960	7%	20%	192
Twin Lakes	464	6%	15%	70

Plum Creek	1,248	6%	18%	224
Ramsey	496	4%	10%	50
Memorial Park	256	3%	10%	26

Clearly we have a long way to go at Hole in the Mountain, Ramsey and Memorial Park. SWRDC would like to schedule additional visits to the three lagging parks and one additional visit to both Plum Creek and Twin Lakes. To try to boost the survey results they plan to send out another press release in the local papers for each of the parks as well as additional outreach in the communities by stopping at restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations etc. to put up surveys and try to capture results in that way.

To do this additional work they have requested an additional 40 hours of contract time, \$3,600 in total. I've been speaking with Jessica Welu, our lead on this project, about this need and am fully supportive and recommend we spend the additional funds to try to get a good sample survey.

Data Management System Phase VI

Joe and I met with the team at Full Circle Group to discuss what the Phase VI update will entail. As we've worked with Full Circle Group over the past several years we've methodically worked our way through making a more user friendly and report heavy system. This phase will center on the Customer Relationship Management needs, better tracking and a better way to query in the DMS.

GMP&T Summer Membership Meeting

Joe and I attended the GMP&T summer membership meeting in beautiful Holdingford through which the Lake Wobegon Trail runs. Part of the day included a ride on the trail and a visit to the covered bridge (a popular photo stop) and a really interesting hands on demonstration of all terrain wheelchairs from Action Trackchair out of Marshall, MN. These chairs are available in several State Parks and are a great way to improve access. More about this during the meeting on Wednesday.

GMRPTC
System Plan Coordinators Report
July 2022

FY24 Funding Application

So far we have 15 applications for funding started in the DMS, with one of them officially submitted. Of the 10 who have entered at least an initial grant request amount, the average request is about \$823,000. There are a couple more potential applications we could see before the deadline of July 29th. A number of applicants have been in steady contact with us for technical assistance, which is a good sign that the applications will be high quality.

I've also heard anecdotes from a few other designees that they are not submitting this year because of other open projects. Our partners seem to be very busy with the work we've already funded, and I'm glad to see them being cautious before they get ahead of their capacity. Inflation is also a very scary prospect right now. No one really knows how to price projects that may not be bid for a year and a half. This is affecting current projects that are coming in over budget, and others that are not submitting because of the uncertainty. It may also affect the amount of local match provided in current applications, as agencies may hold more in reserve to cover contingencies.

Reviews and Technical Assistance

Most of our technical assistance time this past month has been in support of funding applicants. In addition to a number of phone calls and emails from regional partners, we sent an email to all of our designated partners with some final tips, tricks and a funding deadline reminder.

No site visits were conducted this month. Zoom and phone support was provided for applicants completing Designation Applications or Master Plans in Northfield, Hubbard County, and Roseau. Hubbard County has submitted a second Designation Application for Deep Lake Park, and if we get a couple more before August, we will likely include those evaluations in next month's ETeam review.

District Outreach

This month Renee and I attended the GMPT summer meeting along the Lake Wobegon Trail in Holdingford. What a spectacular segment of trail to explore! It was good to visit with several of our regional partners, including a couple of newer folks we are just getting to know.

I had an exploratory meeting with the producers of Common Ground, a documentary show on Lakeland Public TV (Bemidji/Brainerd). They are absolutely excited about all the story possibilities in our Regional parks and trails. We picked out some priority sites/stories and are putting them in touch. They hope to get to a point where they are doing two in-depth stories based on our leads every year.

An interesting meeting with a senior staff at the Northwest Minnesota Foundation may prove helpful for our District 2 parks and trails candidates. NMF sees the potential in community and economic development from our Legacy system. They are exploring ways to provide support and capacity building to the local partners in the area through their programs, which may have some benefit to applicants.

I also attended this month's GMPT online forum on Master Plans. HkGi and Gina Hugo from Sherburne County did a great job talking about public engagement as a part of the planning process. If you are able to attend one of these workshops in the future, or catch a recording on the GMPT website, please take a look.

DMS Planning

Renee and I met with our Data Management System development partners, Full Circle Group. We provided them with a few technical improvements we would like to add to the DMS in this next phase of development. The most important of those is a better Customer Management System (CMS). We've done what we could to set up for the CMS in previous phases, but haven't been able to put one in place until now. The system is at the size where better capability to communicate, track, and manage interactions with all of our partners and applicants directly through the DMS is needed.