



## Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trail Commission

Virtual Meeting on Zoom

**Minutes for September 22, 2021**

**APPROVED**

### **Commissioners Present:**

Rick Anderson, Ted Suss, Jonathan Wolf, Bryan Pike, Barry Wendorf, Beth Pierce, Jen Foley, Brad Bonk, Tim Engrav, Peg Furshong, Tom Ryan, Tom Stoa and Matthew Hill

**Commissioners Absent:** None

**Consultants Present:** Renee Mattson - Executive Director, Tess Dandrea - Administrative Assistant

### **1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Ryan at 10:00am**

Due to spikes in COVID the September meeting was held virtually

Discussion about board nominations planned for the October in person meeting in Granite Falls. Anonymous ballots will be used to nominate themselves, or others, for a position. Administrative Assistant will record nominations on a white board, at which time nominees may accept or decline and a vote will be held. Chair Ryan encouraged commissioners to think about a leadership role.

Term expirations, no terms expire in 2022, however a number of term expirations come up in 2023 as per usual, which is half the board.

### **2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance**

Ben Anderson, Stearns County Parks Director

Jon Oyanagi, Speaker for Diversity Training

### **3. Approval of Agenda for September 22, 2021, Minutes from August 25, 2021 and Treasurer's Report through August 2021**

**Motion** by Engrav

**Second** by Anderson

**Motion Approved**

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

##### Mountain Bike User Surveys

Surveys completed as of Sunday, September 19, 2021.

- Final counts:
  - 284 Duluth
  - 220 Cook County
  - 117 DMRA

Five trail counters deployed in Duluth, and other locations until October 1<sup>st</sup> and we will see the final report in November.

Follow up on Streetlight research. Raven McKnight is our researcher hired by the Coordination Among Partners funds, working out of Met Council offices. Going back to 2018 through 2021/22 for data. All the Greater Minnesota shape files have been uploaded to the servers. Initial reporting will be ready in a few months. Census block numbers are all anonymous going back three years. Bonk commented that it's an exciting research project and Lake Brophy Park has been built in that time and will have numbers showing the growth.

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

Mattson noted that the funding application visits continued in September.

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

*Engrav* – Noted the nominations relate to the Executive Committee positions of leadership

*Pierce* - Nothing

*Pike* - Gull Lake Trail, Fairview Township segment is open, and an Open house, rescheduled for Oct 2nd and will attend on behalf of the Commission.

*Hill* - Nothing

*Bonk* - Nothing

*Furshong* - Memorial Park folks reached out, nothing beyond that

*Wendorf* - Nothing

*Suss* - Nothing

*Anderson* - Trying to get more involved with the Casey Jones Trail, longest running state trail not built. Had a regional trails meeting may look at getting designation for Pipestone and Laverne area for a trail.

*Stoa* - Missed the August meeting as he was volunteering on a National Geographic Ship in Iceland. Background picture was an erupting volcano.

*Ryan* - Nothing

*Foley* - Nothing

*Wolf* - Nothing

## 7. Continued Business:

### 7.1 Wright County Funding Application Resolution

Discussion to reconsider the vote on the Wright County Applications at the August meeting. Wendorf noted he was a no vote on Wright County and there has been no discussion with Wright County regarding that vote.

Prior to Wright County, we voted on Detroit Mountain Recreation Area's funding application, and it was a unanimous vote to disallow the application as it did not meet the standards set forth within the Commission's template. With Wright County, the previous year, the resolution was allowed and was funded, and there was no notice given to Wright County that the resolution would not be allowed in subsequent years. Our website shows we have a template, but we do not state that everything in that template must be followed. Discussion about the Wright County resolution and DMRA resolution followed with input from all Commissioners. Commissioners queried staff about the process.

**Motion** by Suss to reconsider Wright County Application, not decide upon

**Second** by Anderson, requesting a roll call vote on the motion

**Roll Call Vote – Unanimous**

**Motion** by Pike after review of Wright County's two funding resolutions we seek to have them resubmit a funding resolution that meets our template requirement by the end of October.

**Second** by Bonk

**Discussion** the issue is that Wright County used the same resolution as last year, with no communication from the commission that it was not acceptable for this year. It was determined that this was a review process error to not inform Wright County that their application resolution needed to follow the template this year.

The commission needs to adjust the template language to make the funding resolution a requirement, in resolution form, and also allow applicants time to produce the correct resolution if not deemed acceptable.

Commission should reconsider the Wright County funding application as submitted due to lack of outreach after last year's funding discussion. Only the conflict of interest statement is missing in this year's resolution. The contract with the DNR, which applicants sign, has that stipulation, which covers the criteria.

**Motion withdrawn by Pike**

**Motion** by Wendorf to accept the two Wright County applications as complete

**Second** by Anderson, with a request for a roll call vote on the motion

**Roll Call Vote resulted in 10 yea and three nay**

**Motion Approved**

## 8. New Business:

### 8.1 Jon Oyanagi Presentation Part II Diversity Training

Diversity Equity and Inclusion follow-up. The George Floyd incident was the catalyst for this. Jon asked what the commission has done to be proactive around racial equality and make ourselves more diverse? We are seeking to connect with Tribal Liaisons to have a better perspective.

The Metropolitan System and DNR are doing things in terms of racial equity.

Ramsey County has 51% people of color and 49% white. Jon will send a new link on white fragility and privilege. Also, GARE-Government Alliance on Race and Equity, [www.racialequityalliance.org](http://www.racialequityalliance.org). Met Council implemented a similar GARE. Their application now includes racial equity questions, check their website. DNR uses a Diamond Inclusivity Assessment, ask Erika Rivers for this information.

A lot of opportunity exists for urban kids of color. Can we make better strides with CPO in communities of color? Communities of color require relationship building in order to build trust. Michigan DNR has built a huge facility in the middle of town to introduce the urban population to the outdoors in a comfortable environment, "Bridging Facilities".

### 8.2 Strategic Planning Review

#### Staffing:

- Consulting budget has funds available to accommodate growth and provide better support to partners.
- Contract, or hourly assistance, on an as needed basis per project.
- Following up with awardees, training, branding and more visibility needed.

#### Outreach to Parks and Trails partners:

- More equitable projects.
- Could we develop our own "Connecting to the Outdoors"? Work with other groups for example, the Wilderness Inquiry, and leverage other funding. Invite others to a common event.
- Communication: How would it be communicated? Seminars for smaller communities. Perhaps provide examples of what good applications or projects looks like.
- Commissioners could attend more partner meetings in an effort to get to know them better and have them know us. COVID disrupted commissioners getting out to visit and connect with people.

#### Equity: What are best ways to interact with underserved communities.

- ACTION STEP: ED will distill ideas into bullet points for October meeting.

- Reach out to assist park administrators to find what are good ways to interact with underserved populations / communities of color to determine what might be attractive to them. For example, the Hmong community likes fishing so maybe they would appreciate a dock.

**Evaluation Team Interaction:** Will have discussion at October meeting.

- ETeam invited to the October meeting and in person attendance preferred as can build relationships but will have Zoom component available.
- Discussion points:
  - What is the ETeam perspective overall, what is working well and what could be improved?
  - Is there a written document of scope of work?
  - What is the difference between qualitative and quantitative measures and how they are weighted?
  - What they are seeing in projects evolution. Could they expand on their philosophy regarding ranking and value?
  - Could questions be given to ETeam prior to meeting?
  - Some commissioners have not had an opportunity to have interactions with ETeam.
  - ACTION STEP: Mattson will send new members last year's comments to review.
  - All commissioners are welcome to sit in and listen to ETeam meetings as they are very informative.

#### **Tribal Liaison/Outreach**

- Our partners and other agencies have liaisons to the Tribal Communities.
- All tribes have liaisons, and we must understand that one person does not represent all tribes.
- Acknowledging and listening are good first steps and their perspective would be a benefit to us. Tribes are unique due to owning land, treaties and they are a government. Maybe staffing should include an underserved population.
- Could we reach out to MPCA and DNR and listen to their experience and also MN Tribal Environmental Council.
- Commissioner Anderson is working with Adam Fairchild at the Red Lake Band, White Earth and Leech Lake.
- Does the Statutory language as to who is eligible to apply need to be changing first?

- Start with Lieutenant Governor's office – should be consulted with a letter of inquiry to them and also MN Indians Affairs Council.
- Could Mattson outline two proposals on how to proceed and also form and work with a committee.

**Committee structure recommended for the following four areas.**

- **Staffing Committee:** Commissioner Engrav
- **Marketing/Communications Committee:** Commissioner Furshong
- **Tribal Outreach Ad hoc Committee:** Commissioners Furshong and Suss with Mattson
- **Policy and Procedure Review Committee:** Commissioner Anderson suggests this is an important committee to put in place.
- **ACTION STEP:** ED make some recommendations as to what committee structure ought to look like based on our operations and the conversation at the Strategic Planning session. Once we approve the committee structure we can add Commissioners to the committees. Mattson agreed there are important considerations to this work. Feels we should take up the work as needed so as to not overwhelm Commissioners.

**9. Old Business:**

**9.1 Review of FY23 Funding Applications – Commissioner Questions**

- Gull Lake Trail (GLT)– LCCMR meeting tomorrow cut off at 60, GLT at 59.
- Few of numbers need to be tweaked.
- How deep can we go with questions, can we cut out parts to fund additional projects? All projects look good, but not all have matches as smaller communities do not have the resources.
- CPO, three had many components that were addressing handicap accessibility.
- ACTION STEP for ED to pull out scores before next meeting.
- Is it appropriate for staff to ask if there is a more effective and efficient way to achieve goals as many projects funding differ vastly?
- Are facility esthetics or historical projects a proper use of our funds? Points were made some state prevailing wages can impact cost.
- Should geographical equity be considered.
- Previous applications have an easier path should past unfunded applications be reviewed? Should we have someone work with them to have an opportunity to call for information or help?
- Should list priority be revisited?
- Is phasing an option to consider?

- System is not perfect but it has been working, so let's be cautious as to not throw out rules that work.
- Develop a committee to discuss.
- Could a year be made available for those projects that have not been funded?

**10. Approval of August Expenses**

Commission Expenses	\$467.68
<u>Consultant Expenses</u>	<u>\$23,604.41</u>
Total	\$24,072.09

**Motion** by Engrav

**Second** by Wendorf

**Motion Approved**

**11. Next Meeting and Agenda Items**

October 27, 2021, Granite Falls Kilowatt Community Center in person with a zoom back-up. A Memorial Park tour will be offered after the meeting  
Meeting Adjourned at 3:03pm

**Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission**  
**Director's Report for September 2021**

Partner Meetings

- GMPT article for monthly newsletter
- GMPT Monthly Membership Call
- PTLAC Liaison's Call

Funding Application Site Visits

This has been a busy and interesting month of site visits for Joe and me. Our travels have taken us around the state, as well as through Canada, into the US, back through Canada and back to the US again. Commissioner Pike joined us in the Canada-US travel portion.

Site tours were conducted as follows:

- Wright County Stanley Eddy Park Reserve – August 26 (Commissioner Pike attended)
- Wright County Robert Ney Park – August 26 (Commissioner Pike attended)
- Stearns County Beaver Island Trail – August 27 (Commissioner Foley attended)
- Isanti County Irving and John Anderson Park – August 27
- Northwest Angle Northerly Park – September 1-2 (Commissioner Pike attended)
- Sherburne County Big Elk Lake Park – September 14 virtual
- Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp – September 16 virtual (Commissioner Pierce attended)
- Red Lake River Corridor, East Grand Forks LaFave Park – September 15
- Fairview Township Gull Lake Trail – September 15 (Commissioner Pike attended)
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Site Visits and Partner Calls

- Lake County Mountain Bike Trails Grant Close Out
- Minnesota DNR ORV Focus Group
- Minnesota Parks and Trails Council Annual Dinner – thank you to Commissioner Stoa who provided an extra ticket, so I was able to attend

Streetlight Research Project

There have been two calls with the researcher hired through the Coordination Among Partners funds and the research team at Met Council to discuss the project and timelines. Jillian Reiner at Hagstrom Engineering will be uploading all the park and trail shape files into the Met Council shared drive. This information is necessary to accurately track the park and trail visits.

There was a good question asked by Commissioner Wendorf at the August meeting about how soon the work would begin and what periods it would cover. Since we can review previous years information the Round 1 information will include counts from 2018 through 2021.

Information gathered will include the following:

- Hot spots of visitation within parks
- Local vs. non-local visitors
- Demographics

- Weekly average of visitors

There will be a Round 2 of information gathering as we learn more about the visitation demographics etc. The liaisons will be having monthly meetings with the researcher, Raven McKnight and her supervisor on the project, Ellen Esch. I'll share with all of you any graphics of presentations or information that may help clarify what the project scope is.

#### Mountain Bike Design Standard Project

This project, which began in early 2019, has become stalled due to ongoing medical issues the Rock Solid Trail Contracting employee working on the project has been having for the past year. We are finally back on track for completion, and I'll be having weekly update calls until we have a completed draft version to review. They understand our impatience with the delay and have offered to review the invoicing to date against the contract and make adjustments to address the blown timeline.

**GMRPTC**  
**System Plan Coordinators Report**  
**September 2021**

**Funding Application Reviews**

Renee and I have completed all of the funding app site visits. Thank you to Commissioners Pierce, Pike, and Foley, who joined us on these last few visits. Here are the visits completed this last month:

- Wright County Robert Ney Park
- Wright County Stanley Eddy Park
- Stearns County Beaver Island Trail
- Isanti County Irving and John Anderson Park
- Sherburne County Big Elk Lake Park (virtual)
- East Grand Forks LaFave Park
- Fairview Township Gull Lake Trail
- Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp (virtual)

Several facilities have completed or are completing minor updates to their application, which may make them unavailable for you on the DMS. Most of them were for ineligible items in the budget, such as contingency funds or ineligible equipment. Others may need to correct a map or drawing that were missing items – minor items that do not disqualify an application.

The Evaluation Team met with us on Sept. 14 to review the funding application. They provided a wealth of support helping clarify four questions we always ask for their opinion on: Which Legacy Pillars does this application support? Does the project complete a meaningful component of the Master Plan? Is it viable to be completed in a 3 year contract period? Is the budget realistic? Following that meeting, Renee and I completed our initial scoring and met to compare notes. She will be presenting to you the first cut of our combined scores for the applications. We will review in-depth in October.

**On-Site Reviews and Technical Assistance**

We are still receiving regular requests for information about the Commission and becoming a part of the system. This month I talked with Lewiston about a trail opportunity they are exploring. We also provided technical assistance to the Designation Applications and Master Plans listed below as they were preparing their submissions.

Renee and I were joined by Commissioner Pike on a site visit to Northerly Park on the Northwest Angle. Thank you, Bryan, for joining us on this adventure that almost lasted a lifetime!

The Evaluation Team completed the following evaluations. We will have full reports and a decision point for you at the October meeting.

- St. Joseph's East Park Designation Application ranking
- Lake of the Woods County Northerly Park Master Plan scoring
- Otter Tail County Phelps Mill Master Plan scoring

**Partnerships and Outreach**

We were able to attend or participate in meetings or workshops held by several of our local and regional partners:

- University of Minnesota Tourism Center Research Showcase
- MN DNR Off Road Vehicle System Plan Focus Group
- Southwest Minnesota Trails Planning – we were unable to participate in their workshop due to schedule conflicts but are now connected into this process.