



## Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trail Commission

Granite Falls Kilowatt Community Center

**Minutes for October 27, 2021**

**APPROVED**

### **Commissioners Present:**

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

**Commissioners Absent:** Tom Ryan, Matthew Hill

**Consultants Present:** Renee Mattson - Executive Director, Joe Czapiewski – System Plan Coordinator, Tess Dandrea - Administrative Assistant

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

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

Mayor Dave Smiglewski ,Granite Falls

Sharon Pazi Zea, Upper Sioux Community Member

Ann Fink

Gina Hugo, Parks Coordinator, Sherburne County, virtual

Bob McGillivray, Sr. Project Manager for the Trust for Public Land, virtual

Crystal Johnson, Granite Falls City Manager

Kristi Fernholz, Planning Director Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission

### **Evaluation Team Members**

Dennis Fink, in person

Bob Bierscheid, virtual

Ron Bastian, virtual

Wayne Sames, virtual

Kathy Bergen, virtual

**3. Approval of Agenda for October 27, 2021, Minutes from September 22, 2021 and Treasurer's Report through September 2021**

**Motion** by Engrav

**Second** by Foley

**Motion Approved**

**4. Executive Director's Report**

In addition to the written report, Mattson had a request for approval of a resolution for St. Louis County authorizing Secretary/Treasurer Pike and System Plan Coordinator Czapiewski, to be designated approvers in the new St. Louis County accounting system

**Motion** by Wendorf

**Second** by Furshong

**Motion Approved**

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

In addition to the written report, Czapiewski said several applications are being worked on in the portal. Master Plan update, give additional detail for applicants of components for Operations and Maintenance budget. For example, CPO - how will they engage the public, they need to be doing outreach, including marketing to engage the public. We are providing a tool/template for use, and requesting a narrative, and budget, for what is needed to be sustainable. Parks and trails have an ongoing cost to maintain and that should be considered when creating a master plan.

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

*Pierce* - Nothing

*Stoa* - Nothing

*Foley* - Nothing

*Engrav* - Visited designated parks on the way to Granite Falls, Kraemer Lake, Rockville and Robbins Island

*Furshong* - Call with Kristi Fernholz about Memorial Park

*Wolf*- Received a letter soliciting a donation thought it was from our commission and it was not. Was from the Parks and Trails Council.

*Bonk* - Nothing

*Suss* – Is working with Henderson and Sibley County on a designation. He commended Czapiewski on a job well done.

*Pike* - Attended Oct 6 Gull Lake Trail ribbon cutting for Fairview Township section.

*Anderson* - Working with Casey Jones on new section.

## 7. Old Business:

### 7.1 Funding Applications FY23

THPO – How can we strengthen our relationship to tribal entities? Could Redwood Falls utilize ARPA funding for their sewer upgrade project?

Discussion: Is phasing also committing to \$2 million for future phases automatically for those phased in for FY23? Also discussed maintenance and how we track completed projects. Has the Commission looked at long term ramifications of these projects into the future?

**Duluth Traverse** - Good project – CPO focus on underserved neighborhoods.

**Robert Ney Park** – ADA accessibility

**Cannon Valley Trail** - 26 miles long, joint powers board operates trail. Well maintained but they have some erosion issues.

**Red Lake River Corridor LaFave Park** - Playground nature scape not up to par in development. ADA access to ballfields which are not part of the designation. Not a phasing plan, but rather a reduction to remove ineligible components and spend more time on the playscape development plan.

**Hormel Nature Center** - Is not a CPO because applicant did not label it as such. We would report it as such, it was an improvement.

**Wright County Stanley Eddy Park** - Original ask \$50,000 but the appraisal came in lower, and it is reduced to \$32,000 with the county still a 33% match.

**Lincoln County Hole in the Mountain** - Horse trails and sledding hill their priority. Campground component can wait for a later cycle.

**Duluth Spirit Mountain:** Came to us for Nordic piece, this completes the Nordic connection from Grand Avenue to the upper Nordic trails, connection to the Zoo is not in their Master Plan and a portion of the snowmobile trails, an abutment could be delayed.

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At this point in the meeting there was a lunch break and comments by the Mayor and others welcoming the GMRPTC to Granite Falls.

Mayor Smiglewski welcomed the group and talked about their project. A unique partnership with the school district resulted in a camper cabin being built by the school. The city acquired the cabin which was a high quality end product. This partnership was very successful.

Furshong invited Sharon Pazi Zea, who is a member of Upper Sioux Community, to make comments. Pazi Zea spoke from a family perspective and said sometimes indigenous people feel as though they are invisible. Land is cherished in their culture, and they would like to be included and respected, as it is Dakota homeland. It would be

appreciated if the developers would send plans to the tribe for review to make sure, for example, any burial sites are not disturbed. We could use our website to educate others. Commissioners thanked her for her perspective and taking time to come to the meeting.

**Chester Woods Park** - Could it be CPO? It did really not fit the parameters for CPO.

**Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp** - Phased reduction \$120,000. The city could do some of these projects themselves over time.

**Redwood Falls Ramsey Park** - Is ARPA funding possible for this request? At the time of application, they were not aware of funds available? Sewer and water infrastructure – some of the septic systems are in the flood zone. Because current system needs to be removed could it be phased? Staff will check and respond to the questions raised.

**Fairview Township Gull Lake Trail** - Under review of LCCMR – needed 12 members to approve and only had 10 votes yes at the last meeting and did not get a majority to pass the LCCMR proposal on. There is another meeting in November.

#### **Funding discussion regarding phasing projects:**

- Are phased projects guaranteed funding?
- Would phase two require a new application or could it simply be resubmitted?
- How would the financial match be interpreted?
- Would the same rating score apply?
- Some places want/need a phased approach.
- What if the funding criteria is changed from one year to another?
- Not the same pool every year so projects might lose funding.
- Phasing sometimes leaves the project weaker.
- Review for criteria to be discussed in January.
- Mattson and Czapiewski's performance have made the Evaluation Team confident, and that provides a good place to work from.
- Some applications were rated higher than historical projects, they ranked in the 60's and 70's. So those that were not awarded funding are they back in the pool next year?
- How can any remaining funds be used? This discussion will continue at the November meeting. Some commissioners will do research and report back.
- ARPA dollars?
- Are COVID funds appropriate for counties and cities to get people outdoors?

## **8. New Business**

### **8.1**

#### **Evaluation Team discussion points**

- Regional Designation: Parts of state are different, for example population wise.

- Goal is the preservation of land, more so than development.
- Get young people involved in the work of the Master Plans.
- Funding levels for park and recreation have been increased significantly at state and federal level for land conservation dollars.
- How does commission track previous projects? When are they complete?
- How are projects considered complete? Mattson accompanies DNR staff on the close out tours 10% hold back until project has been reviewed. DNR will review projects over time as they do the contracting. 2.5% off the top to go to them to manage and contract GMRPTC grants.
- Ease of access - 15 miles is different in different places of the state.
- The tutorial should state that they must consider a long term commitment to maintain a park or trail.
- Does agreement have a conversions element?
- DNR does have conversions. Road widenings can also interfere.
- Is the park being used for its original purpose and operated properly.
- The DNR visits parks every five years.
- Connecting People and the Outdoors is a great pillar. Continue to train with agencies to understand how these dollars are to be used.
- Keep promoting Legacy – renewal is coming up and we need support to continue good work.
- Master plan training in development.
- Endorse use of money for planning. Some of the projects are good but poorly written. Maybe get help for small cities for application.
- Phasing portion - be clear to applicants that future funding it is not guaranteed.
- Be aware of amount and how Farmland /Agricultural properties are being put into park land. It could be an issue in the future if it is needed for food production.
- It would be informative for ETeam to visit sites and have Czapiewski point out what has happened.
- Be aware that others in the state are purchasing land such as solar farms and developers.
- The natural environment is considered differently in different parts of the state.
- It is valuable for Commissioners to meet with ETeam.
- Thanks to all for the amount of time and effort put into the projects.

## **8. New Business**

### **8.2 Designation Application for 20-007D City of St. Joseph East Park**

*Czapiewski* - Up for scoring upon completion of Master Plan, high ranking means designation eligible, medium or low does not, but they can reapply. Evaluation Team ranked this application Medium

Question of size and number of amenities? Outdoor recreation becomes insignificant when too many amenities in the park. Close to four larger designated regional parks.

**Motion** by Pike to accept the Evaluation Team rank of Medium.

**Second** by Engrav

10 yeas

1 nay

**Motion Approved**

### **8.3 Master Plan 21-007D Otter Tail County Phelps Mill County Park**

**Motion** by Bonk moved to table the designation until they can get the Master Plan budget in place and have staff communicate and investigate the historical and operational issues. ETeam would have to re-evaluate it.

**Second** by Suss

**Motion withdrawn**

**Motion** by Bonk moved to decline the designation until historic and operations comeback for evaluation.

**Second** by Suss

10 yeas

1 nay

**Motion Approved**

### **8.4 Master Plan 16-050D Lake of the Woods County Northerly Park**

**Motion** by Pike to not approve the designation.

**Second** by Bonk

**Pike withdrew the motion**

**Motion** by Suss to designate the park and recommend that they apply for funding to upgrade/strengthen their Master Plan.

**Second** by Wendorf

2 nays

9 yeas

**Motion Approved**

### **8.5 Executive Committee Elections**

Terms begin January 1, 2022 and run through December 31, 2023

Chair – Rick Anderson

Vice Chair – Tim Engrav

Secretary/Treasurer – Bryan Pike

At-Large – Peg Furshong

**9. Approval of October Expenses**

Expenses for October 2021

Commission Expenses: \$1,926.54

Consultant Expenses: \$37,804.93

Total \$39,731.47

**Motion** by Wendorf

**Second** by Suss

**Motion Approved**

**10. Next Meeting and Agenda Items**

November 24, 2021, Sartell Community Center or Virtual Meeting Adjourned at 3:00 pm

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Vice Chair Anderson

Date

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

Partner Meetings

- GMPT article for monthly newsletter
- GMPT Annual Membership Meeting - Presentation
- PTLAC Liaison's Call
- PTLAC October committee meeting

Funding Application Review

Site visits for the FY23 funding applications have been completed. Joe and I spent much of the last month reviewing the applications and talking to applicants about the ability to phase some of the projects. The phasing discussions help us in the ways we can present to you possible funding scenarios. The applications for FY23 are all very good, which make the choices more difficult than in years when one or more of the applications are clearly not well formed and need more work. Our intent with the options for your consideration is to enable you to think about funding more projects by way of phasing some. We are not making recommendations other than our scoring based on the criteria.

There have been suggestions that we aren't funding equitably across districts, and we certainly appreciate a good, thorough discussion for this important decision making process. To help frame the conversation of distribution please note the following:

**FUNDING OVER TIME**

**District 1** - 12 designated facilities, 9 facilities funded, 1 facility has never applied, 2 facilities have been unsuccessful in their applications.

**District 2** – 5 designated facilities and all 5 have been funded.

**District 3** – 10 designated facilities, 8 facilities funded, 2 facilities have been unsuccessful in their applications.

**District 4** – 20 designated facilities, 11 facilities funded, 8 have never applied, 1 is a brand new designation (Big Elk Lake Park) and has an application in this round.

**District 5** – 9 designated facilities, 7 facilities funded, 2 have never applied (1 of them, Garvin Park, has an application in this round)

**District 6** – 10 designated facilities, 8 facilities funded, 1 facility was not successful in their application, 1 has not applied until this year.

Based on the above applications and success of those applicants, I would note we have in fact spread the funding out among the districts in a pretty equitable distribution.

Site Visits and Partner Calls

No site visits in October, but an upcoming grant close out visit to Twin Lakes Park November 1. Call with Xinyi Qian at the U of M Tourism Center about an economic research project for Greater Minnesota. This is just an exploratory call and has yet to be fully developed.

### Streetlight Research Project

There are regularly scheduled calls with Raven McKnight the researcher working with Met Council on this project. All the Greater Minnesota shape files have been uploaded into their system and work is progressing on the project. Because of the later than planned start, the contract will be extended to account for the extended time it took to put the new hire in place, giving us the full two years that we had originally planned for.

### Trail Count and User Study

As noted previously, the trail count and survey are complete, and Andrew Oftedal is now working through the data and planning to provide the report in early November.

### 2021 Policy and Planning Report

Currently in the process of writing the report and tracking down good photos. The report will feature photos highlighting some of the beautiful art in our parks and trails this year. The format will remain largely the same again this year. Same number of pages and same basic layout. This is a planned strategy to keep the cover similar each year, just a different featured photo and color, taking the color cue from the Legacy logo. Just a reminder, the report is due to the legislature by January 15 of each year.

### Fiscal Agent

St. Louis County is going to an on-line system for their accounting. This change means all our invoicing that I currently spend a few hours on will change over to an on-line accounts payable system. It will be good in the long run, but is going to be a pretty big learning curve for a few months. The change also means that the Secretary/Treasurer and Joe will need to be the approvers of all the invoices I submit for payment. Currently Bryan signs off on my invoice and I sign off on his. Since I will be the submitter in the system, I cannot also be the approver, so Joe and Bryan will need to get into our payables after they've been entered. Joe will be the approver for all invoices except mine, which Bryan will approve. There will be a simple resolution for the Commission to approve at the October meeting noting the change.

**GMRPTC**  
**System Plan Coordinators Report**  
**October 2021**

**Funding Application Reviews**

Renee has led our review of potential phasing opportunities within the current pool of funding applications. The good news, as it has been since the close of applications, is that we have a very high quality pool of projects this year. We also have a larger amount of funding available, compared to a typical year. While this can make choices difficult, it doesn't make it unpleasant.

I look forward to presenting the full slate of scored projects and opportunity analysis, based on our homework over the past month. Please remember that you can review full applications in the DMS by logging into the application portal using your Commission email. There are also new pictures for most of the site visits in the Exavault shared drive, located in the Commission Login under the About the Commission tab on our website.

**On-Site Reviews and Technical Assistance**

We did not conduct any formal site visits this past month. Several contacts from "eligible" facilities have indicated progress on moving their Master Planning processes forward, as well as progress on several potential Designation Applications we previously reported. We are excited about the possibilities for these facilities and figuring out how they fit into the new Strategic Plan guidance.

As noted last month, 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

We have also discussed potential new designation applications with Lake of the Woods County and the North Country National Scenic Trail. The NCT has been discussed before but was put on the back burner by the agency. They are now approaching us again. There are many technical hurdles, but we are trying to work through them to present you with the best policy approach to a facility of that nature.

**Partnerships and Outreach**

Both Renee and I attended the GMPT Annual Meeting, held virtually last week. It was a great way to connect with several of our longstanding partners and meet some new people. We are lucky to have such a great, well-organized group as our partner.

**Data Management System Phase V Updates**

We are in full swing for this phase of DMS updates with consultant Full Circle Group. The focus for me in this phase is to align the applications and process with our new Strategic Plan. That means realigning the Master Plan portal to coincide with our streamlined MP components, add the Track 2 Evaluation module for the ETeam, and update the Designation Application and all document and report exports to match.

We have run into one tricky spot in translating the Strategic Plan direction into the Master Plan and need your help. It has to do with how our Partner Agencies will assemble and display the new requirements for a Maintenance and Operations Budget in Component 6, pages 54-55 in the Strategic Plan. We will spend some time during my report to cover this. We will appreciate your guidance.

**Contact Update Contractor**

Karen Umphress finally has all of the information necessary to begin updates in our Data Management System and our partner's Great Minnesota Outdoors website. We've learned a lot just going through that process, which will become easier with some of the tools we are incorporating in DMS Phase V.