



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trail Commission

Virtual

Minutes for November 24, 2021

APPROVED

Commissioners Present:

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

Commissioners Absent: Brad Bonk, Matthew Hill and Tom Ryan

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 10:05am.

Vice Chair Anderson stated the goal of this meeting is to determine final funding recommendations for FY23 applications.

2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance

Reid Huttunen, City of East Grand Forks

Gina Hugo, Sherburne County

Bob McGillivray, Trust for Public Land

3. Approval of Agenda for November 24, 2021, Minutes from October 27, 2021 and Treasurer's Report through October 2021

Motion by Engrav

Second by Stoa

Motion Approved

4. Executive Director's Report:

Nothing to add beyond the submitted written report.

5. System Plan Coordinator's Report

- Discussion regarding Phelps Mill Park. They would have preferred designation but understood what we were looking for. Now have a large piece in place as they have received a \$175,000 grant for the interpretation of the park. Working with MHS on the development of the historic district. So they have worked out how all elements will work together.
- Northwest Angle, Joe has call later today to speak with them about the resolution and next steps.

6. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission

Wendorf - Nothing

Stoa - Hiked the Barn Bluff trails a few weeks ago and was very impressed with the trails. Parking lot was full which was great to see.

Furshong - Nothing

Pierce - Nothing

Foley - Nothing

Engrav - Trail groups in NE Minnesota, Koochiching, St. Louis and Cook counties joined forces to form support for the region. Trail clubs can work with all counties involved and have access to other sources of funding, i.e. bonding and Legacy.

Suss - Continues to work with Henderson and Sibley County on designation of a 200-acre park off County Road 6. Excited about application forthcoming as phenomenal geology and great energy around the project.

Pike – Commissioner Hill's resignation caused him to think about how to best find applicants for District 2. He has reached out to various contacts in D2 to spread the word about the opening. Is there anything else we can do to search out candidates? Mattson stated we have posted the vacancy in the usual places and goes out as part of the Open Appointments notices from the Secretary of State. Would like representation from the far Northwest part of Minnesota to provide some separation geographically.

Wolf - Nothing

Anderson - Still working with Casey Jones and SRDC to update a regional trail plan. They have funding through ARPA in nine counties in SRDC. Trying to connect from Blue Mounds to Pipestone on highway right of way on Highway 75.

7. Old Business:

7.1 Funding Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2023

Discussion to have separate motions for each of the applications or vote as a package. Two Commissioners have conflicts of interest and would vote to abstain from those recommendations.

Motion by Suss to approve all projects with the recommended amounts except Garvin Park and Irving and John Anderson Park. Anderson asked for a discussion on Gull Lake Trail at the end. Suss agreed.

Discussion Suss asked how we handle the phased project reductions? Do we apply any special treatment for reductions due to phasing? Last meeting the discussion of Commissioners was in agreement to keeping same scores for a phase two project and not going lower, though applicants may also want to strengthen an application with new components, but any project must go through the full application process, and it is the commission prerogative to grant, or not grant, funds. Mattson added there were ineligible components in some applications that would not be funded, so phasing in future applications would not apply. Stoa wanted to make the point that no applicant has a right to funding, it is up to the Commission to review each application on its merit and grant funds. Anderson suggested a vote is taken here and the subject of phasing is addressed later. Engrav thanked staff for hard work. Wendorf asked if there is an option to hold the \$212,053 over for the next funding cycle. Mattson stated that is not an option as we are at the end of the fiscal year and funds must be expended or lost.

Wendorf: \$274,742 unspent dollars, can it be spent for following years? Vice-Chair Anderson asked that this discussion be tabled until later.

Second by Engrav
Motion Approved

Motion by Suss to approve Garvin Park application at the amount of \$1,109,350
Second by Pike
Motion Approved
Abstention by Anderson

Motion by Engrav to approve Irving and John Anderson Park in the amount of \$780,225
Second by Foley
Motion Approved
Abstention by Wendorf

Mattson described the options available to grant the remaining funds. Redwood Falls Ramsey Park for a partial sewer connection, Spirit Mountain Recreation Area for the snowmobile abutments, or Gull Lake Trail for design and engineering costs associated with this last phase of the trail work. Staff

recommends granting the Gull Lake Trail the design and engineering costs, which would fund in whole or in part all 20 eligible applications and applying the remaining funds of \$212,053 to a Connecting People with the Outdoors Small Grant Fund. This initiative would be open to all 67 currently designated facilities. The program would be used for pilot projects or other new initiatives. The DNR grant staff has been made aware of this potential grant fund and is in agreement this could be done. Engrav asked if staff has the capacity to add more work with this additional funding application cycle? Mattson said she and Czapiewski have discussed this and do feel they can do this work. Czapiewski feels this is an exciting option and a way to generate more creative thinking about CPO. Anderson feels this is an excellent opportunity to assist underserved communities in Greater Minnesota. Engrav suggested we will need Commissioners to serve on a Funding Criteria Committee. Stoa asked how legislators feel about this grant. Mattson stated she will reach out to Legacy Committee Chairs about this concept if the small grant fund is approved. Pierce asked how this is different from the CPO grant we currently have. Mattson stated we hope to spur more ideas and creative thinking around projects that may not have fit into the CPO grant previously. Pike asked what would happen to the funds if we learn this is not supported by Legacy Chairs or other legislators? Mattson stated the worst case scenario would be the funds would not be used and would go back to the corpus of Legacy funding. It would not be a good use of the money to partially fund projects that may not benefit from partial funding.

Motion by Engrav to grant \$167,280 to the Gull Lake Trail for design and engineering, and the remaining \$212,053 used to establish a pilot project for the Connecting People with the Outdoors Small Grant program.

Second by Stoa

Motion Approved

Motion by Suss that the Commission acknowledges the score phased projects received in this round be used as consideration for a future application received in the next three years.

Second by Wendorf

Discussion - If new funding application is better, applicants could use the stronger application. Intent of motion is that the score can go above, but not below, the original application. Foley asked if there is a time frame or is this in perpetuity? Suss noted that the motion states the next funding round. Anderson noted that some smaller facilities may not choose to apply the following year as they have fewer staff to work on an application. Mattson noted that a one year window may not be sufficient as it may be difficult to find an appropriate match,

would Suss consider an amendment to allow for a three year window on reapplying? Suss agreed to the amendment as did Wendorf. Pike asked if we hold the applicants to the same match amount for future applications. Suss's intention was they not lose points for a lesser match in a future application. Stoa noted for staff scoring in the next round, the applicant might be adding elements that are not as good a quality as the previous application. Anderson noted we have the ability to score the application in two phases, the previous application and the new elements, if applicable. Mattson noted that we offer the applicants the option to reduce the match for a project in which we cut portions of the project. We expect the same percentage match if we reduce aspects of a project, but not the total dollar amount submitted. Czapiewski stated we can deal with these issues as they arise because we have the time when we're reviewing and scoring the applications to address them.

Motion Approved

8. New Business

8.1 Cannon Valley Trail Resolution 023

Motion by Pike to approve Cannon Valley Trail Resolution 023

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

8.2 Approval of Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Members

Reappointment of four members:

Heather Stirratt - DNR

Sumbal Mahmud – Ad Hoc

Jim Shoberg – Greater Minnesota

Jon Oyanagi – Met Council

Motion by Furshong

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

Appointment of five new members:

Alexandera Houchin - DNR

Gina Hugo – Greater Minnesota

Allison Mark – Ad Hoc

Tom Watson – Ad Hoc

Karen Burdick – Ad Hoc

Motion by Furshong

Second by Suss

Motion Approved

9. Approval of November Expenses

Expenses for November 2021

Commission Expenses: \$128.08

Consultant Expenses: \$ 21,051.56

Total \$21,179.64

Motion by Foley

Second by Anderson

Motion Approved

10. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

No meeting in December 2021, next meeting will be held at the Sartell Community Center on January 26, 2022

Meeting Adjourned at noon

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

Partner Meetings

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

Funding Application Review

Review of the 20 eligible funding applications has continued with additional review of the applicant budgets. As happens, we found some calculation errors by applicants, mostly for ineligible expenses related to contingency and some with errors in design and engineering percentages. The FY23 funding spreadsheet reflects those changes and also includes the budgets for each project. As a result of the errors, there are additional funds to grant above our original expectations.

Site Visits and Partner Calls

- Lyon County Twin Lakes Park grant close out – November 1
- Red Lake River Corridor – Crookston. Due to high bids for project components they will likely need to seek legislative approval for a grant extension.

PTLAC call with State Arts Board

The PTLAC liaisons (Emmett Mullin, Laura Preus) and I had a long anticipated call with Sue Gens from the State Arts Board. We've begun a conversation about a potential joint project between Parks and Trails and the Arts, for an "Art in the Parks" initiative. Nothing has been determined, but there is an interest from some legislators to see funds partnering to do projects together. The concept would be to use some of the Coordination Among Partners funds to create art in parks across the three systems. Another call is scheduled for early January.

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

Joe, Bryan and I have all completed installation of the VPN and OnBase Connections and associated training with St. Louis County to move to the new Accounts Payable system. The county staff has been helpful, but this (for me at least) a big learning curve. The first batch of invoices for the new system will begin in December. And hopefully, everyone will be paid!

GMRPTC
System Plan Coordinators Report
November 2021

Funding Application Reviews

Further evaluation of the funding applications revealed a couple of errors in the applications that weren't taken care of in the first round of edits, for various reasons. Mostly these errors were inclusion of ineligible expenses like contingencies or engineering costs over the allowable amount. After correcting those errors and incorporating your guidance from last month, we have found our proposed project list is in pretty good shape. Renee sent the updated spreadsheet with the agenda packet. Instead of asking you where to trim, we are now asking you where we can reinvest some remaining funds back into phased projects or other future opportunities.

On-Site Reviews and Technical Assistance

We did not conduct any formal site visits this past month. A fair amount of time was spent with some of our potential designation applicants as they build their teams and applications, most notably the City of Henderson and the City of Northfield. This is a great time of year for applicants to be working on their designations or even preparing for the next round of funding applications, so if you know anyone that should be doing so, please help connect us!

Designation Update

Following last month's meeting, I had conversations with the two agencies that had Master Plans reviewed for designation.

Otter Tail County Phelps Mill – This facility was turned down for designation due to the need for additional understanding of how the Historic District will be run, and how that portion of the facility will be built, funded, and managed. County staff indicated that they already have the building information we are looking for thanks to extensive work with the Minnesota Historical Society, it just didn't make it into the Strategic Plan for some reason. They also have already received a generous grant from MHS to develop its plan for interpretation and management of the Historic District. Once that component is complete, they will update the Master Plan with that information and resubmit.

Lake of the Woods County Northerly Park – This facility was designated. Following the meeting, I contacted our liaison about completion of the updated County Resolution in support of the application, which is something I had promised to you and was already in process before last month's meeting. A very satisfactory County resolution (affirming the previous 2015 version) was completed and has been submitted. The official notice of designation, including our desire to have them come back in the next funding round for additional Master Plan development funding, has been sent.

Partnerships and Outreach

I attended a virtual meeting for SMART, which is the regional trails consortium in southeast Minnesota. They are one of the regional groups we have targeted in our outreach efforts, and includes several state, local, and potentially regional trails. This was a good opportunity for face time with some of those dormant applicants and to meet a couple of new people. Dorian Grilley from the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota gave an excellent report on trail and bike funding opportunities coming down from the Federal level. Senator Nelson from the Bonding Committee also had a great conversation about building trail connections, the 40/40/20 split, additional state funding opportunities, and a general round table discussion.

Renee and I are starting to build our list of local, regional, and statewide groups that we want to have more consistent, formalized contacts with. Tracking this will be easier as the CRM (Customer Relationship Management) module of our DMS is built over the next few weeks. At a future meeting we will be asking you about your role in those relationships, from helping us make connections to participating in the conversations.

Data Management System Phase V Updates

After last month's discussion about Maintenance and Operations planning in facility Master Plans, I completed a working model for how that could work in the DMS. We approached a few of our ETeam members who are experienced in managing and planning individual facilities for additional feedback on the draft, which was very helpful. We now have that component, as well as the full re-alignment of the Master Plan module, sent to Full Circle Group for redevelopment. They are now developing it in their "test" database, which is where it will be tested before it goes live. We are also developing the "Track 2" ETeam review module at the same time, as well as other pieces as envisioned in your new Strategic Plan.

We are also figuring out how to connect the DMS with our GIS system, which is being managed by contractor Jillian Reiner. Currently there are no pressing projects for this capability, but we envision a number of uses in the future where we can create regional and statewide maps from information in the Master Plans and Funding Applications.

Contact Update Contractor

We are at the point with this "Contact Update" project where most, if not all, of our facility managers have been contacted at least once. This project is resulting in a number of updates to our local contact information, basic facility information in the DMS, and is starting to help agencies update their information in the MN Great Outdoors website. Many thanks to Karen Umphress for her perseverance and excellent attention to detail on this project!