Minutes for September 23, 2026

Minnesota Discovery Center
1005 Discovery Drive
Chisholm, MN 55719
APPROVED

Commissioners Present: Rick Anderson, Rob Mason, Beth Pierce, Jen Foley, Peg Furshong, Tom Stoa, Karlin Ziegler, Tim Engrav, Barry Wendorf, Brad Bonk, Jonathan Wolf, and Tom Schmitz

Commissioners Absent: Reid Huttunen

Consultants Present: Renee Mattson-Executive Director, Joe Czapiewski System Plan Coordinator and Tess Dandrea – Administrator, virtually

1. **Call to Order** – Chair Anderson 10:05 am
   Meeting Goals are to conduct a timely and efficient meeting.

2. **Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance**
   Jim Mason, guest of Rob Mason and Marty Halvorson of the Chisholm City Council. Welcome by Collin Luke, City of Chisholm Parks, Trails and Recreation Director and Minnesota Discovery Center Executive Director Char Conger. The Discovery Center opened in 1977 as Iron Rang Interpretive Center. In 1984 it was renamed Ironworld USA and became the Minnesota Discovery Center in 2009. The campus has expanded since 1977 with many buildings and new programming added. There are permanent and temporary exhibits and the current Prohibition exhibit is very popular. Redhead Mountain Bike Park is a mountain bike trail for all skill levels and 25-miles of trail. Future plans include adding a kiddie park nearby and connections for Redhead visitors to ride into town.

3. **Approval of Agenda for September 23, 2026, Minutes from July 22, 2026 and Treasurer's Report through July 2026**.

   Consent Agenda approval of the following items that were not approved at the July 22 meeting due to lack of a quorum.

   - Minutes for June 24, 2026
   - Treasurer's Report through June 2026
   - Approval of July 2026 Expenses
   - Approval of Master Plan Update for Quarry Park 14-007D
   - Approval of Master Plan Update for Northerly Park 16-050D

   Motion by Engrav
   Second by Schmitz
   Motion Approved

4. **Executive Director's Report**
   Commissioner Huttunen resigned due to scheduling conflicts related to his job as city administrator. Reported on an accessibility audit conducted by our specialist Jennifer Skulski at Garvin Park.

5. **System Plan Coordinator's Report**
   12 Funding Applications for FY28.
   ADA discussion which included creation of a list of approved vendors for the applicants.

6. **Items from Members and Letters to the Commission**
   Bonk – reported the MCA Mountain Bike Race was hosted at Lake Brophy Park recently and a couple thousands attended.
   Zeigler – discussed the upcoming MRPA conference in Duluth.
   Schmitz – reminded the group of the MRPA conference October 22-23, 2026.
   Wolf - nothing
   Stoa **–** is new Chair of the Parks and Trails Council.
   Furshong – This is her last meeting due to recently relocating. The Commissioners thanked her for her service over these past 10-years.
   Foley - nothing
   Mason – Gull Lake Trail through Lake Shore and the bridges are almost done. First meeting last Friday for a new Master Plan. Baxter connectivity with connections to the Paul Bunyan Trail is part of the update.
   Engrav – was sorry to miss the last meeting Redhead is anchor system to complement the other trails in the area and offers a different experience.
   Pierce -Celebration of 30 years of Mesabi Trail was well attended.
   Wendorf – was sorry to miss the last meeting. The Grant closeout for Springvale Park was conducted in July. The Parks and Trails Council helped with property purchase at Irving and John Anderson Park.
   Anderson - nothing

7. **New Business:**

7.1 Project Scope Change Cannon Valley Trail 24-031R and 21-011F

Motion by Mason
Second by Wolf
Motion Approved

7.2 Project Scope Change Mesabi Trail 22-012F

Motion by Schmitz
Second by Wendorf
Motion Approved

7.3 Overview of FY2026 Funding Applications

Commissioners and consultants discussed and considered two scenarios for distributing FY28 grant funds. Plan A funds the majority of the requests but spreads the funding over two fiscal years. Plan B only funds the top scoring projects and provides the funds in FY28.

Analysis by classification

Natural Resource Based Parks: 7 applications, with $8,083,682 requested, 18% local match.
Special Features: 4 applications, with $6,704,777 requested, 18.4% local match
Trails: 1 application, with $1,970,611 requested, 15% local match
The average cost is $1.4 million per project.

Review Process

April 1, 2026 – Applications open
July 31,2026 - Applications close
August/September - staff review, site visits, begin adjustment/clarification
September - ETeam review and comments, staff scores applications and compiles project comments. Detailed project review presented to Commission for discussion and initial prioritization
November - Commission typically finalizes prioritizations
December - Applicants notified of recommendations
January 15, 2027 – Funding list and annual report provided to Legislature

Czapiewski presented 12 qualified applications

1. **26-006F Prairie Woods ELC Improvements**
   $2,027,708 requested, 27% match.
2. **26-018F Freeborn County Songbird Trail Construction**
   $1,970,611 request, 15% match
3. **26-011F Duluth Spirit Mountain Completion of the Nordic Ski Center,**
   $2,025,000 request, 25% match
4. **26-014F Crow Wing County Northland Arboretum Acquisition,**
   $470,900 requested, 15% match
5. **26-024F Olmsted County Oxbow Park & Zollman Zoo Bridge & Playground Replacement,**
   $1,515,000 request, 25% match
6. **26-021F Chisago County Fish Lake Park Recreation and Trailhead Improvements,**
   $1,791,838 request, 15% match
7. **26-026F Detroit Lakes Detroit Mountain Campground,**
   $2,437,777 requested, 12% match
8. **26-013F Wright County Bertram Park South Access Improvements,**
   $1,621,347 requested, 10% match.
9. **26-021F Big Falls Campground Phase III,**
   $727,000 requested, 0% match
10. **26-022F Frazee Wannigan Park Water and Sewer Extension Project,**
    $605,416 requested, 18% match
11. **26-025F County Deep Lake Park Development,**
    $1,295,000 request, 16% match
12. **26-016F Austin Hormel Nature Center Connecting Southern MN Students to Nature**(CPO)
    $271,472 requested, 20% match

Mattson presented options A and B for funding. Discussion followed.

Motion by Furshong to set aside $250,00 in funding for archeological/environmental grants ($125,000) and access grants ($125,000)
Second by Foley
Motion Approved

8. **Old Business:**
   - **8.1 Marketing RFP Proposals and Decision on Awarding the Work**

Drift North was selected
Motion by Wolf
Second by Engrav
Motion Approved

8.2 Park Finder Application, Updated Cost and Timeline

8.3 DNR Administration Fee
Motion by Zeigler to offer $200,000 for administrative services for FY28 and FY29
Second by Mason
Motion Approved

9. Approval of Expenses for July, August and September 2026

July 2026

Consultants	$62,608.18
Commission	$ 2,946.60
	$65,554.78

August 2026

Consultants	$33,423.63

September

Consultants	$36,414.76
Commission	$ 8,991.81
	$45,406.57

Motion by Wendorf
Second by Schmitz
Motion Approved

Update on Executive Director Search. Consultant would like time to get additional applications.

10. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

October 23 at the North Branch Library with a tour of Isanti County Irving and John Anderson County Park to follow.

Vice-Chair Tim Engrav Date