



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Sartell Community Center - 850 19th Street South

Sartell, MN 56377

Minutes for January 24, 2024

DRAFT

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

Commissioners Absent: Reid Huttunen

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

1. Call to Order by Chair Anderson 10:00am

2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance

No one from the public in attendance

3. Approval of Agenda for January 24, 2024, Minutes from November 22, 2023, and Treasurer's Report through November 2023

Motion by Engrav

Second by Mason

Motion Approved

4. Election of Officers

Ballots taken for a vote of officers for a two-year term. Ballots cast and tabulated by Czapiewski with virtual attendees sending their vote to Mattson via chat.

Slate of Officers:

Chair – Anderson

Vice Chair – Engrav

Secretary/Treasurer – Wendorf

At-Large – Furshong and Foley

Upon the vote the slate of officers for 2024/2025 is as follows:

Chair – Anderson

Vice Chair – Engrav

Secretary/Treasurer – Wendorf
At-Large - Furshong

5. Executive Director's Report

Discussion of DNR administrative costs. We are charged 2.5% for administrative costs by the DNR including a percentage of rent, technology and administrative costs. We were not able to schedule a meeting with DNR for today due to conflicts. User data counts program "Placer a.i." counts people and "StreetLight" counts cars. GMRPTC would purchase a contract for around \$39,000 and our partners could participate at a rate of \$1,500 per park. Pierce mentioned another option, Datafy. Explore Minnesota Tourism uses it. Wendorf asked about the grant extension bill that we're working on with GMP&T and questioned if we pay for that? We do not, that expense is covered by GMP&T through the dues paid by their membership. Wendorf also asked about the Art in the Parks Program that we voted on some time ago requesting our own portion, is it still remaining in the larger pot of all the entities? We are assigning more to artists than the other partners. We all have the same overall amount but we will direct our funds differently. There will be a program administrator which is in the process of being hired. The RFP is out and posted. Hope to have someone in place by March 1, 2024.

6. System Plan Coordinator's Report

We are doing some updates to our gmrptcommission.org website. Karen Umphress is doing the technical work on this. It's been three years since the last update and needs some reorganization. More information separation in the report tab. Right now there are a lot of questions about master plans and questions about the upcoming funding cycle.

7. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission

Pierce – nothing from District 1 on designated facilities but is working with IRRRB on a Trail Summit in April and they would like to hear from GMRPTC and the work we're doing. More to come later.

Bonk - nothing

Schmitz - reminder MRPA annual convention in Mankato this autumn. We should have a Greater Minnesota seminar there.

Mason – nothing

Ziegler – stepped off the GMP&T Communications Committee, would like to set up a forum with Joe and Renee and DNR staff to talk about granting.

Stoa - it's been a hard, difficult winter. Ice Park in Winona made ice last week and the ice climbing season is underway.

Furshong – Upper Sioux Agency State Park is closing soon.

Engrav – Minnesota Bound listed favorite activities in Minnesota and Sandstone was listed as good ice climbing! Many facilities are struggling with lack of snow in the Northeast Region, like everyone is this winter.

Wolf – was questioned about tree removal in Bend in the River Park. He was asked by a friend about the tree removal in the park. Czapiewski acknowledged that the trees being taken are as a result of trying to keep the prairie open. They have found the funds to remove them from the prairie and are doing so.

Foley - nothing

Wendorf – 8th annual Freezer Burn Fat Bike Race at Springvale Regional Park was held recently and registration was low. The temperatures were cold this year. The rider who came the furthest was from Duluth. He is sending some photos to Joe for posting on the website. The organizers are looking to do a Sun Burn Fat Bike Race in the summer.

Anderson - nothing

8. New Business:

8.1 Approval of Gina Hugo and Jim Shoberg for continued term of service on the Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee

Motion by Engrav

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

8.2 Update on the FY25 Mandatory Grantee Meeting

January 23 was a mandatory grantee meeting for all FY25 grant recipients, held in person at the Sartell Community Center. We did open the meeting to all our facilities and offered an online option. With those in person and online there were 50 people. We had speakers from the DNR grants office as well as from SHPO. The presentations were very good, informative and helpful. Thank you to the Commissioners who attended. Mattson noted we had folks there who we don't normally see much of. The networking among the grantees was valuable and everyone felt it was very worthwhile to attend. Czapiewski noted it was good to see the interaction between DNR and SHPO staff. He envisions expanding next year to include THPO staff. Ziegler asked if it was mandatory for the FY25 grantees to be in person, it was not. She did think it was hard to follow the meeting in the virtual format and it would be more helpful to be in person, but a few just could not be there due to schedule conflicts. The recording and power point presentations will be sent out to all the attendees in follow up. Stoa asked if the new grant category has had any applicants yet. We have not, still pretty new. Discussion around having this fund available year round, not just in the regular granting cycle. Flexibility in the funding cycle is important to be helpful to our facilities.

8.3 Legislative Agenda for 2024

We will have a bill asking for extensions for some of the grant projects as well as a bill that distributes any excess collections in the Legacy fund to the Parks and Trails partners.

8.4 Updating Policy and Procedure Manual

Commissioners Engrav, Foley and Mason volunteered to serve on a committee to update the manual. We will take one chapter/section at a time and make the update. We need to think

about how this works in the future, not just as how it works now. We will make the edits and bring them to the Commission for approval with a goal of finishing this project by the end of the year. Furshong recommended everyone read through it.

8.5 Resolution 030 Wright County Project Scope Addition

There are funds left from the \$67,000 equipment grant and they request the ability to put those funds toward the purchase of an enclosed trailer to move the equipment to other parks and to move the track wheelchair around as needed.

Motion by Furshong

Second by Wendorf

Motion Approved unanimously via roll call vote

9. Old Business:

9.1 FY26 Funding Application Updates

Anderson thanked the committee members, Bonk, Wendorf, Foley, Ziegler and Engrav that worked on this latest update.

Czapiewski went through changes and updates suggested by the committee.

The document with the updates is attached. There were changes made to clarify the 20% seasonal rental limit on rental facilities. There was good discussion about the suggested changes and language clarity, particularly around trails not having a deed restriction, but having a 20 year minimum use.

Motion by Wendorf to adopt the recommended changes to the funding guidelines and criteria

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

10. Approval of December 2023 and January 2024 Expenses

Consultants expenses for December	\$35,552.34
Consultants expenses for January	\$22,605.44
Commissioner expenses for January	\$ 3,316 20
Total	\$61,473.98

Motion by Furshong

Second by Mason

Motion Approved

11. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

February 2024 no meeting

March 27, 2024

Walnut Grove Bar & Grill, (651, 681 or 551 depending upon what source you look at. The town is small, you won't not find it!) Main Street, Walnut Grove, MN.

Following the meeting, we will have a tour of Redwood County Plum Creek Park.

Meeting adjourned at 12:45pm

**Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission
Director's Report for December 2023 and January 2024**

Partner Meetings

- GMPT Newsletter Articles
- PTLAC Liaison's Calls
- GMPT Communications Committee
- GMPT Membership Committee
- Parks and Trails Council

December Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting

The final meeting of the year was hosted by the Met Council at the Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, a highlight of which was a zoo tour that included the new baby giraffe and a behind the scenes visit with the male giraffe. We bid goodbye to two members and will be approving two of the Greater Minnesota representatives, Gina Hugo and Jim Shoberg at the January meeting.

Site Visit and Facility Calls

January 3, Detroit Mountain Recreation Area. Joe and I were invited to meet with the new general manager at DMRA as well as board members, staff and city representatives. There were questions related to the current funding application as well as an upcoming master plan update and what can/should be considered when making the update as it relates to future funding requests.

Call updates with:

- Cannon Valley Trail
- Chisholm Redhead Trail
- Austin Hormel Nature Center
- Mille Lacs County Soo Line Trail
- Cook County Mountain Bike Trails

Legacy Grant Deadline Extension

There are a number of grants facing timeline pressures related to higher than anticipated construction costs, permitting and other issues. Normally we provide support for the bills, testifying on their behalf when needed and monitoring progress during the session. Because we have so many this year, seven in six different facilities, it seems most efficient to write one bill encompassing all the extensions. Elizabeth Wefel and I met with Dan Mueller, Senate Financial Analyst and Ben Stanley, Senate Counsel, to discuss the extensions and language. We will have a bill ready to drop at the start of the session and are lining up chief authors in both chambers, we expect Senator Hauschild to author the bill in the Senate.

We also discussed a blanket bill each session that would return all unspent grant dollars expiring on June 30 of the current year to Greater Minnesota. That language is proving to be a little trickier than a straight grant extension, but we're still working on it and hope to have some idea of a resolution by the start of the session.

Wright County Crow River Regional Trail Grant

We learned that Wright County had unspent funds for the Crow River Regional Trail grant of \$145,920.87, and a grant deadline of June 30, 2023. During the call with Muller and Stanley we discussed a way to recapture the funds, if possible. As it turned out, this grant was part of the blanket COVID grant extensions issued in 2020. DNR Grant Manager Dan Golner worked with us to close out the grant and move the funds into the FY25 Emerging Opportunities fund making us able to retain and regrant.

Legislative Outreach

In preparation for the upcoming legislative session I've been setting up calls and meetings with Legacy Committee members. January 2, I traveled to Ely to meet with Rep. Roger Skraba. We discussed the 2023 Policy and Planning Report as well as our legislative needs in the 2024 session. Rep. Skraba is supportive of our work and will sign on to the bill for our Legacy grant extensions.

I've also had a call with Senator Grant Hauschild who sits on the Senate Legacy Committee, to review our needs this session and apprise him of the issue of the DNR administrative fee.

Placer a.i.

Joe and I have had several calls with a company similar to StreetLight Data company. With our two year research project complete and a change to the way StreetLight is able to collect information, we haven't pursued a Part II with our partners and DNR and Met Council to continue this particular research project. Placer a.i. reached out to me a few months ago with what seemed similar, but even more robust data to StreetLight. Joe and I have had calls to determine better what information is available and how we might best use it for our partner facilities. More to come on this as we gather more input from our facilities. As well, I have shared information with DNR and Met Council to see if a contract extension with Placer might be a good replacement for StreetLight.

SHPO

During our November meeting with SHPO staff we were asked to develop a cover letter and instructions for project review request for our Legacy grantees. After much back and forth we have arrived at a request for project review cover letter that we all hope will provide more clarity on the process and help move reviews along in a more efficient way. This is information we'll be sharing with our FY25 grantees at the Tuesday, January 23 meeting.

Art in the Park Project

Long delayed but finally there is an RFP for a company to manage the process going out this month. I'm hopeful that the issues with getting the funds distributed out from DNR to the artists, when contracted, has been resolved and we can finally start this exciting CPO project.

2023 Policy and Planning Report

The report is complete and has been mailed to the Legacy Committees in the House and Senate, as well as relevant staff and the Legislative Resource Library.

Upcoming Meetings:

Sue Gens – Minnesota State Arts Board, call about the administrative fee they pay and amount

Laura Preus – DNR, call about Upper Sioux Agency State Park granting funds

GMRPTC
System Plan Coordinators Report
December 2023/January 2024

Reviews

No formal reviews were completed during this timeframe. We currently have one designation application submitted for review and a couple of other plans/applications that are in process for submission in the next few weeks. Our goal is to conduct evaluations in late February/March for your consideration at the March meeting. If you know of someone who is in process and looking to be considered this spring, please have them get in contact with me soon.

Technical Assistance

Our local and regional partners have been busy this winter! Between providing in-depth support to new applicants (in-person and via Zoom or other technology), to a variety of support for those in the Master Planning process, to all kinds of funding application and grant questions, it's been fairly busy. Formal meetings or discussion included McCleod County, Renville County, Mille Lacs County, Hubbard County, Detroit Mountain, Chisholm, Hills, Crookston, Red Lake Falls, Lake City, Prairie Woods, and I'm sure some others I'm forgetting.

I'm in the process of selecting and learning a better version of video editing software so that our tutorial content can have more value for our partners. This year's funding application will be the next tutorial release. After that, I plan to start producing tutorials in support of Master Plans and Designation Applications.

Funding Application Updates

Your Funding Application Committee (Barry, Brad, Karlin, Jen, and Tim) provided guidance on a number of different issues staff had identified during the course of the last application cycle. Overall, the number of policy positions modified were very reasonable. A few clarifying changes have also been included, thanks to additional input from our partners at DNR and SHPO. We will review the proposed changes at the meeting for your formal approval.

Once approved, we will begin the process of updating the application portal, toolbox, and creating tutorials to support this year's launch. Renee and I will also be presenting this year's application changes at a GMPT online forum in March, which is something new and will hopefully help answer questions early. This year's application cycle opens April 1 and closes July 31.

District and Partner Outreach

Renee and I met in St. Paul with our DNR grant management staff and SHPO staff. These important meetings have helped improve guidance for our regional partners, as well as our communication with those agencies. Several follow up conversations have helped us prepare for the upcoming mandatory Grants Award Workshop as well as update our funding application guidance. Not to mention how helpful it has been for fixing current grant issues as they pop up.

Our mandatory Grant Awardee Workshop will be completed the day prior to this month's meeting. As of this report, we are closing registration at 50 participants, including in-person and online from current, past, and future grantees. All of our grant funding recipients will be in attendance. Having DNR and SHPO staff participate is a big hit with participants already. Next year we hope to expand to include THPO's.

Our outreach work this past year is paying dividends with new partners, as well as helping to get us back on track with some previous grant projects that were floundering a bit in the aftermath of COVID/inflation/etc. My goal is to continue that kind of outreach where possible as seasons permit!

Consultant Projects

We have met a couple times with a potential new mobile data vendor, Placer.ai, a candidate to replace the Streetlight data that is being phased out. They have a comparable product in many ways, with some added reporting that we weren't able to get with Streetlight. The cost appears to reflect the quality. Renee and I will be reaching out to our Legacy agency partners, as well as regional partners, to assess the value and if there are opportunities to leverage any cost savings.

Consultant Karen Umphress has been busy with a fairly comprehensive website refresh/update. That project will be completed soon. Once that work and some final tweaks to the DMS are completed, we will be re-launching the newsletter/blog with improved formatting.