



## **Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission**

Mesabi Station

111 Station 44 Road, Eveleth, MN 55734

**Minutes for October 23, 2024**

**APPROVED**

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

**Evaluation Team Present:** Bob Bierscheid (virtual), Kathy Bergen and Dennis Fink.

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

**1. Call to Order** – Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 10:00 am  
Meeting goals are to have a timely and efficient meeting.

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

Welcome and overview of the Mesabi Trail by Sarah Ciochetto, Deputy Director of the St. Louis and Lake County Regional Rail Authority. She noted that as of now, 153 miles of trail are built and at full build out it will be 170 miles with the into town connections. Their trail counters show 180,000 riders annually. They expect 2026 to be the full completion date!

**3. Approval of Agenda for October 23, 2024, Minutes from September 25, 2024 and Treasurer's Report for August and September 2024.**

**Motion** by Engrav

**Second** by Furshong

**Motion Approved**

**4. Executive Director's Report**

In addition to the written report, Mattson stated she will meet with DNR Commissioner Strommen in person on November 1 to discuss our administrative fee.

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

Nothing more to report that isn't in the written report except to thank Commissioner Schmitz for getting us a spot on the program for the MRPA

conference and thanks to Commissioner Ziegler for attending the session and helping out.

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

*Pierce, Mason, Stoa, Furshong, Bonk, Wendorf, Wolf, Anderson, Engrav, Foley, Ziegler and Huttunen* – nothing to report

*Commissioner Schmitz* - thanked Mattson and Czapiewski for presenting at the MRPA conference and Commissioner Ziegler for participating in the presentation.

## 7. New Business:

### 7.1 Evaluation Team

*Questions asked and discussed.*

1. When you review a Designation Application or Master Plan for a location you haven't visited, what do you consider or look for when ranking or scoring it?
2. Are there any questions that regularly come up that aren't dealt with in the application/master plan?
3. What are our next steps for our continued growth?

### Evaluation Team Comments:

- The ETeam is a good, diverse group that views plans from different perspectives
- This GMRPTC is continuing to improve
- Sometimes more detail is needed and pictures help, lots of pictures
- Environmental responsibility for water etc. should be considered
- Accessibility - it is good that we are viewing it from many perspectives, other than physical
- Sustainability of parks and trails, how will communities achieve this
- Climate Change-how can we build parks and trails to withstand it
- Descriptions of parks and trails to define and describe as it can be so different from park to park.
- Minnesota has Eco-Tourism but others, like farmers, may see land differently
- NE Minnesota markets quite a lot for nature/tourism
- SW MN is really a prairie and farmland but especially important.
- Revisit original goals and plans. Our financial resources are finite, and we see requests for substantial amounts of money. How can we better balance things out? Do we only give to those who apply, or view from a regional perspective?
- How many designated facilities can we support in the system?
- Commission is encouraged to work with Legacy Committees in the House and Senate. Keep promoting the value of what we have done for the state and look for more funding for Greater Minnesota.
- What do we want our parks to be? For example Ball Parks are not funded.
- What do surrounding communities and the public want? Peoples age ranges are from 0 to 100, with different ethnic groups and an influx of new cultures.
- Some things should be privately funded. We may have bias. Motorized vs non-motorized
- The environment and accessibility are a two-step process.
  1. Can apply for a fund to make improvements within their facility – door openers, sidewalks.

2. We are spending our own money to help facilities understand what the accessibility needs and ADA standards are. For example, Enger Park bathrooms in a Duluth park are beautiful and accessible, but not for motorized wheelchairs it was discovered after they were built.

### **7.2 Review of 21-020D Master Plan Roseau River Water Trail**

Designation Application Score 400 and Grade B

Project has great potential and is needed.

Seven sites, improved access, some boating or canoe access. Investments will be relatively low cost with local services from start to end of river. DNR has facilities that could help with keeping sites clean and should be part of Master Planning process.

**Motion** by Stoa to accept designation and score

**Second** by Schmitz

**Motion Approved**

## **8. Old Business:**

### **8.1 Review of FY26 Funding Applications**

#### **Chisago County Swedish Immigrant Trail**

\$2,933,142     Score 73

Asked county if they could phase project and that save about half a million dollars.

They would keep their score in future applications and can't go below the 73

#### **Rochester Quarry Hill Park**

\$942,206     Score 74

New offices are not public space, and they did not realize that so that is removed and the application reduced by \$403,000. Score unchanged

#### **Lyon County Garvin Park**

\$769,500     Score 68

Commissioner Anderson informed the group that the observation tower is removed from the application, saving \$252,333. This score is from a previous grant cycle.

#### **Great Northern Trail**

\$702,240     Score 67

Asked them to remove the EV chargers at \$19,000 and keep the bike chargers.

#### **Stearns County Quarry Park**

\$600,00     Score 65.5

Expansion of trail but does not comply with the master plan, which is 30 years old and really should be updated to reflect new opportunities in parks.

#### **Willmar Robbins Island Park**

\$2,785,536     Score 61.5

Discussed with them phasing the project, which can happen and cut the cost into two parts.

## Olmsted County Parks Accessible Playgrounds

Fund Chester Woods playground and wait on the Oxbow playgrounds.

Mattson thinks \$13.4 is reasonable budget estimate until we get the November forecast from MMB.

Question what if we have extra money? Mattson recommends roll over to FY27.

Question-would the Amphitheater qualify for Arts? Answer-typically not as funds are designated for programming. No action today as we do not have final budget.

### 8.2 Increased Materials Budget for MNPAiR

Minnesota Parks Artists in Residence has \$14,000 budgeted for materials. Could we augment the dollar amount to adjust for Greater Minnesota having more parks in the project

Suggesting \$26,000 total for additional materials money, \$7,000 in Districts 3 and 4 , and \$12,000 in District 6. The additional funds will be distributed by Forecast Public Arts, which is the fiscal agent for the entire project.

**Motion** by Schmitz to move \$26,000 from our Operating Funds to be used for additional material costs.

**Second** by Foley

**Motion Approved**

### 9. Approval of October 2024 Expenses

Consultant Expenses	\$26,073.88
Commission Expenses	<u>\$ 5,673.59</u>
Total	\$31,747.47

**Motion** by Engrav

**Second** by Furshong

**Motion Approved**

### 10. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

**November 27 Virtual meeting – start at 9am.**

ADA consultant Bill Botten will be in attendance for 20 minutes to greet Commissioners and talk about the projects he can take on.