



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Minutes for January 27, 2021

Virtual Meeting - Zoom

APPROVED

Commissioners Present: Tim Engrav, Beth Pierce, Bryan Pike, Peg Furshong, Brad Bonk, Barry Wendorf, Ted Suss, Rick Anderson, Tom Stoa, Jen Foley

Meeting Goals:

Commissioners Absent: Matthew Hill, Jonathan Wolf, Tom Ryan

Consultants Present: Renee Mattson, Executive Director, Joe Czapiewski, System Plan Coordinator

1. Meeting Called to Order by Vice Chair Anderson at 10:02am

Meeting Goals: conduct an efficient meeting and keep things moving along with good discussion.

2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance: Jay Thompson with Terra Active and an employee of Three Rivers Parks District, Chuck Parins from Morrison County.

3. Approval of Agenda for January 27, 2021, Minutes from November 25, 2020 and Treasurer's Report through December 2020

Motion by Suss

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

4. Executive Director's Report

Mattson provided the commissioners with more information about the Governor's recent budget release. GMRPTC budget is included with the DNR budget. DNR is using the May MMB forecast which is less favorable than the November forecast. DNR will adjust the budget numbers once the February forecast is released in early March. We expect that the February forecast will be an improvement over May and will have ample funds available to fulfill our grant recommendations for FY22.

Mattson asked the Commissioners to approve a letter to DNR Commissioner Strommen to request that \$4 million from the LCCMR fund be used for Local Trail Connections and Outdoor Recreation Grant Programs.

Motion by Suss

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

5. System Plan Coordinator's Report

Czapiewski noted that there have been more inquiries of late about designation and funding applications and master plan questions and past funding projects. People are in a planning mode for the next phase of projects and the upcoming funding application opening.

6. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission

Nothing to report.

7. New Business:

7.1 District Communications and Review (previously DPC)

Czapiewski provided background information about the transition from District Planning Committees to a new model. A year ago, we went through a transition to discontinue the committees. It was not done to eliminate all functions of the DPC, particularly the public engagement piece. There is a strategy document that identifies how we will keep the public engagement process under a variety of formats. We wanted to engage Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails on a component of our transition strategy, including their assistance on review, comment, and feedback on various applications, as another check in our process.

Discussion was centered on public engagement and whether there was a benefit to gaining input for designation and funding applications or does adding voices during the process open the door to individuals with agendas or those who want to lobby for or against a particular project. Applicants in their application and master plan process have, as required, gone through public review and input. Commissioners shared an interest in seeking public input and feedback on the Greater Minnesota system and identifying gaps and what people in a district are seeking. We can strengthen our process by inviting the public to share ideas when we travel around the state for our meetings, perhaps a forum the night before a meeting.

The transition document is a communications strategy document, with a section on general public outreach, not centered around a particular application or facility. It suggests we use all opportunities to connect with user groups, district or sub-district workshops, statewide annual meetings of other groups. Whatever form of

communication would work best for that district, to ensure we have a wide representation of voices on the system development. The difference is review of individual applications vs. system development feedback.

Discussion continued with respect to GMP&T and how they could be used as needed for feedback and input on system-wide strategy. Commissioners noted this is a valuable discussion to have to better understand the needs within Districts for communication, strategy, and feedback. It was suggested we get out to organizations like AMC and LMC to conduct workshops at their conferences so governmental entities are better informed about what we do.

Pierce suggests that in the transition document under **Formal Feedback Loops** just eliminate these first two bullet points and the document will encompass the direction of the conversation.

- Create a formal structure with GMPT for the review of Designation Applications and Master Plans. Review will be based on the Strategic Plan and District visions.
- Create a formal structure with GMPT for the review of Funding Applications. Review will be based on the Funding Guidelines and Criteria.

It was also noted that staff time for multiple visits across the state to meet with only a handful of people may not be the best use of time.

Anderson summarized the conversation that the DPC structure is not the way to continue, we have an adequate review system in place, but we need to do marketing in areas that are underserved in some places where we have few facilities and need to fill the gaps. **A straw poll to determine if there was a will to create a new DPC structure showed there was not an interest.** *Czapiewski* felt that elimination of the two bullet points but keep the remaining document in place would accomplish what we have heard from the discussion today. *Mattson* suggested that changing and adapting our process is good as we grow and develop and timely as we're working on the Strategic Plan update.

7.2 Non-Infrastructure Project Management Policy

Discussion was centered around whether or not to continue to fund invasive species removal/control, prairie restoration and woodland management projects. How do we ensure that after the initial grant the agency continues to take measures to control and stop spread, and for how many years would we require maintenance and removal and how do we monitor?

Commissioners agreed that stand alone invasive species removal/control, prairie restoration and woodland management projects would not be funded, but grants to control invasives, prairie restoration and woodland management related to work done in construction of a trail or property acquisition would be grant eligible. It was

noted that there are grants available specific to invasive species control, including Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, and many other options. Post information on our website as to where there are resources/grants for funding for these types of projects. The Commission expects the landscape corridors will be maintained over the life of the project.

Policy Language would be included as:

“Eliminate Greater Minnesota Legacy funding for invasive species removal and woodland management/prairie restoration with the exception of landscaping within Legacy-funded project corridors.”

Discussion as to how to address equipment purchases:

“replacement schedules and budgets for recreation equipment through at least the first life cycle (typically 10 years).”

This Non-Infrastructure Project Management Policy document will be published in the Toolbox on the Application page of the website.

Suss would like to have a discussion in the future about the role of precedent in our decisions and communications.

Motion by Pierce to approve the policy with changes as noted.

Second by Bonk

Motion Approved by unanimous roll call vote

7.3 Designation and Master Plan Review

Commission vote to affirm the recommendations of the Evaluation Team for the following facilities. Robust discussion took place about the number of seasonal camping sites that currently exist and the necessity to communicate with applicants the need to ensure that additional campsites and boat docks are transient.

19-022D Warroad Point Park Designation Application Rank of High

Motion by Pierce

Second by Furshong

Motion Approved

15-016D Irving and John Anderson County Park Master Plan Update with a Score of 378

Motion by Bonk

Second by Pike

Motion Approved

15-094D Morrison County Belle Prairie Park Master Plan Update with a Score of 380

Motion by Pike

Second by Suss

Motion Approved

7.4 Mesabi Trail – Trail Development Agreement with DNR to Approve the contract as written with the cancellation clause edits.

Motion by Engrav

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

7.5 Belle Prairie Park Resolution 017 to approve use of remaining grant funds for additional design work.

Motion by Engrav

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

7.6 Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee New Appointee

Greater Minnesota will fill the seat vacated by Pete Royer who has termed out with Steve Dubbs from Wahkon.

8. Approval of Expenses

Pike stated the expenses for approval

December

Commission Expenses: \$18,349.94

January

Commission Expenses: \$28,548.32

Total \$46,898.26

Motion by Pierce

Second by Anderson

Motion Approved

9. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

February 24 from 10:00am to 2:00pm in a virtual format

Meeting agenda will be the work on the Strategic Plan Update

10. Adjourn

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

Partner Meetings

- PTLAC Prep for Legislative testimony, multiple meetings on different presentations
- GMPT Communications Committee
- GMPT Legislative Action Day, presentation
- PTLAC Liaisons Monthly Meeting
- Parks & Trails Council Legislative Agenda Presentation
- GMPT Campground Opening Forum, discussion around 2021 opening guidelines
- GMPT Legislative Forum

Legislative Meetings

The 2021 Legislature convened on Tuesday, January 5 and it's been busy from the start. Legislative calls and Testimony in February.

February 3 – Testimony in Legacy Finance – effects of COVID and budget reductions and response to them by Parks and Trails

February 10 – Testimony in Legacy Finance - Diversity and Inclusion of BIPOC Communities in the Legacy Funds

February 11 – Senator Senjem, bill related informational meeting

February 15 – Rep. Anderson, meeting to address questions about trail connections and our process for designation into the GM system

February 17 & 18 – Rep. Murphy, bill needs from GM and provided her assistance with grant extension information for Hermantown Proctor Munger Trail Spur

Bill Introductions

Legacy Bill – All funds

HF1079 | SF971

Commission Operating Budget out of General Fund

HF1264 | SF787

GMRPTC Funding Recommendations for FY22

HF1208 | SF1072

Bond Funding for Local Park and Trails Connections

HF1039 | SF513

DMS Phase IV

Continued weekly meetings with Full Circle Group on the Phase IV enhancements. When complete we will have an enhanced reporting component.

Evaluation Team Meeting

Meeting to discuss Section IV of the Strategic Plan Update.

Media Mentions for the Mask Out, Minnesota campaign

Press Conference January 28

Morning Take political e-newsletter

WDIO TV – Duluth

KBJR TV – Duluth

KDLH TV – Duluth

KQDS TV – Duluth

WCCO TV – Twin Cities

KIMT TV – Rochester, Austin and Albert Lea

WDSE TV – Duluth, Almanac North, interview on 1.29.21

KDAL AM Radio – Duluth

KROC AM Radio – Rochester

Hometown Focus – Iron Range print and offline news

WNMT AM – Hibbing

Reader Weekly – Mask Out logo filled one-quarter of page 5 in the 2.11.21 edition

GMRPTC
System Plan Coordinators Report
February 2021

Funding Guidelines and Criteria Committee

Staff completed an update of this document, which was reviewed by the committee (Jen Foley, Beth Pierce, Tom Engrav, and Barry Wendorf with Renee and myself) and approved for Commission action. Significant upgrades in format/layout were made and policy recommendations from the Non-infrastructure Committee's work was included, as well as a few other updates brought forward from last year. Once the Commission approves it in February, staff will begin work updating the DMS funding application, tutorials and application toolbox in time for the April 1 – July 30 application season.

On-Site Reviews and Technical Assistance

No on-site reviews were conducted in February, although we continue to have requests for information about designation applications, master plans and funding applications. Of particular note were discussions about the Swift County/Appleton OHV Park, Hole in the Mountain's Master Plan update, and a new park in St. Joseph.

The ETeam met to review one designation application for Sherburne County on February 8. Due to this month's focus on the Strategic Plan, the Commission will be considering that review in March. We will have a new GMRPTC regional context map analysis of the region to include in this review.

DMS Phase IV

Renee and I continue to meet weekly with Full Circle Group on this update of our Data Management System (DMS). On February 15 we reviewed a demonstration of the new Pre-App portal, which will allow us to record and track conversations we have with agencies that are considering designation for their parks and trails but haven't yet started an application. They also demonstrated a new "tickler system", which will help staff set reminders to follow up on action items for specific facilities, such as funded project interim deadlines or checkups on unit master plan progress. The new archive and deletion protocol is also up and working, which helps to reduce clutter and secure our data.

Public Engagement

This past month Renee and the marketing consultant launched the "Mask Out" initiative. I had a small role in posting the release to our website/social media and receiving some public feedback. We also dealt with an inquiry from the state's Parks Rx program and attended GMPT's Legislative Day.

Strategic Plan

This is where the bulk of my time was spent this past couple of months. We have been forwarding the Commission sections of the plan in preparation for this month's Commission meeting. The goal of the meeting will be to 1) review the graphic layout for sections 1-3, 2) receive written editing updates, 3) make sure that the policies and direction of sections 4-6 reflect the Commission's work over the past two years, 4) formally approve those sections for graphic design, and 5) discuss the Commission's preference for any public review or release of the document.

Section IV was reviewed in a joint meeting between the ETeam and the Commission subcommittee that worked on the new Track Two review process (Anderson and Pike). Section V was in many ways the last work of the DPC system, as those committees developed the vision and values for each District over the course of their five year existence. Section VI was created after extensive discussion between Renee and myself as to how we can set the Commission up for implementation and eventual evaluation success; this will be the first time you have reviewed that material and may be the most valuable focus of attention at the meeting.