**APPROVED**

**Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission**

**Minutes for June 22, 2016**

Sartell City Hall, Sartell, MN 5637

**Commissioners in Attendance:** Mike Hulett, Marc Mattice, LuAnn Wilcox, Tim Kennedy, Jannik Anderson, Rick Anderson, Tom Schmitz, Mike Hulett, Rita Albrecht, Barry Wendorf

**Commissioners Absent:** Tom Ryan, Keith Nelson, Peg Furshong

**Staff and Consultants Present:**  Renee Mattson, Executive Director, Joe Czapiewski, System Plan Coordinator, Kathy and Jeff Schoenbauer, Schoenbauer Consulting

1. **Meeting called to order at 10:15am by Chair Hulett**
2. **Approval of May 25, 2016 Minutes:**

**Motion** by Mattice

**Second** by Pike

Commissioner Albrecht questioned the Land O’Lakes Trail reference in the minutes. Commissioner Pike also unfamiliar and requested that reference be removed.

**Motion Approved with that change**

1. **Treasurers Report:**

Update on the grant amounts remaining in the two active account.

**Motion** by R. Anderson

**Second** by Schmitz

**Motion Approved**

1. **Approval of the Agenda:**

**Motion** by Schmitz

**Second** by Pike

Request by Commissioner Wendorf to add the Legislative Auditors Report on the Audit of the Legacy Programs under New Business 11.3

**Motion Approved**

1. **Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance:**

Mary Koep – Brainerd, MN

Ben Winchester – Researcher MN Extension Office

1. **Executive Director’s Report:**

There was a good meeting with Xinyi Qian after the May 25, 2016 Commission Meeting. She has been contacted to do economic impact studies in Cook and Itasca Counties and there may be a way for us to partner on their studies.

At the June 20 partners LAC phone call it was discussed that our operating budget request to the Legislature will come through a DNR request. The budget request must be to the DNR for inclusion in their internal budget discussion by July 29. DNR Parks and Trails staff meets with the Commissioners staff in early August and the budget requests are to MMB on August 12. Mattson will prepare a proposed operating budget for FY17 as well as a proposed budget request. Commissioner R. Anderson suggest the Executive Committee should be involved in the budget work to assist the ED.

Additionally, at the meeting it was discussed among the partners that the 40-40-20 structure will stay intact during the next legislative session. Mattson will work with the Greater MN Parks and Trails lobbyist to prepare a plan for the next session.

There was discussion about the need to move the Commission meetings around the state to the districts and that will be happening with the July meeting in Detroit Lakes – Detroit Mountain, the August meeting in Duluth – Hartley Nature Center, the August LAC meeting will be in Duluth as well and the October meeting in Moorhead – at MB Johnson Park.

1. **Items from members and letters to the Commission:**

*Wendorf* – likes the idea of moving meetings around the state and the ability to look at projects we fund.

*Mattice* – poor survey numbers from the first week of counting at Bertram Park.

*Wilcox* – brought to the Commissions attention the Met Council study on racial equality along with the Op Ed article from a teacher concerned about students spending all their summer indoors looking at their smartphones.

*Kennedy* – met with the ED of the Superior Hiking Trail Association and their vision for the future and our designation process. Establishing a framework for the future. Also talked to a representative at the City of Duluth about the application process. Finally, met with the Lake County group working on their mountain bike system plan.

*J*. *Anderson* – busy at Concordia Language Camp

*Schmitz* – DNR planning to close the golf course at Fort Ridgely State Park, even though they spent several million dollars doing work on the golf course. Discussion about what will happen with the park, it will not become a regional park, it will remain a state park but the golf course does not meet the mission of the DNR and it will be removed. Bison being moved to Minneopa State Park from Blue Mound State Park. There will be a drive through of the bison herd. Mankato and Blue Earth County are working on a natural use regional park in a gravel pit site.

*Hulett* – District 3 has lost John Young Jr. A great public servant and also a member of the DPC in District 3.

1. **System Plan Coordinator Report:**

DPC meetings for July are being scheduled. Two goals, one to review the rankings and two, to review the system plan and the system district initiatives. Applications for DPC membership are open and we do need additional members. Have had very few applications, only one for each district. We do have some turn over with members not returning so we are in need of more applications. Interested applicants can attend the DPC meetings prior to being approved by the Commission. The applicants will be reviewed by the Commission at the July meeting and appointed.

ETeam will meet in early July to review the Master Plans; we believe there will be 12-13 plans submitted for review. The funding application is open now; designated parks and trails are able to submit application and those applicants getting scored now will be notified once approved by the Commission and alerted to the funding application deadline.

There was discussion of the website traffic and the new blog and resource library on the website. Commissioner Mattice requested we remove the master plans that are on the website as sample plans now and we replace them with plans from the new Master Plan Portal.

1. **New Business:**
   1. **Ben Winchester – Researcher MN Extension Office**

Ben is in the office of Community Vitality, a research fellow, not a professor. All the research Ben does is under the umbrella of Rewriting the Rural Narrative. Much rural research and narrative is from 1950s, few of our counties are agriculturally dependent any longer. There is not a single county in the state that derives more than 25% of its income from agriculture. Only five counties are agriculturally dependent at all. Everything he will talk about today has a citation behind it and he will be happy to provide more information on anything he’s talking about today.

In rural Minnesota the rural population has gone up 11% since 1970. In the state the population loss is in the 18-25 year age group. Occupied housing units are up but the population has decreased, but that is the 18-25 year age group who were not home owners anyway. The influx of people is in the 30-50 year age group who want to move back to the rural areas. There is a brain drain of the 18-25 age group moving from their rural homes to the cities, to go to college and start careers. 18 year olds have been leaving small towns and rural areas for 70 years. Then they want to raise families and move back to their small towns. The population in rural areas isn’t taller, it’s wider.

Rural areas become urbanized and then it looks like we have fewer in rural areas, but that is because rural areas are reclassified.

46% of all Minnesotans move every five years. They may move within the same community or across the state, but they move. We are highly mobile and move all the time. Hennepin and Ramsey counties are the only counties to capture 18-25 year olds, they however lose all other age categories.

The formula for how we move within an area:

Work – 18-25 miles from home

Shop – 45-60 miles from home

Recreate – Two hours away from home

As you age your radius does get smaller. But regionality matters, and people travel, a lot.

The model of people who live where they work is dead. And the 1099 economy (consulting / self-employment) is huge, 19% of any employment in any state. And 95% of rural Americans have nothing to do with agriculture. 25-30% of homes in rural areas are owned by people over the age of 70. 56% of agriculture GDP is generated in the metro area.

Volunteering and civic engagement has also changed dramatically over the years. There is a need to change the social infrastructure to define a mission for the newcomers.

When you move to a town you don’t know what the town HAD, you only know what the town HAS, so the loss of a grocery store or hardware store in the town don’t matter to the newcomer, they matter to the long-time residents. Don’t hold on to the negative narrative, see the potential a town has today.

The immigrant population is VERY concentrated, and primarily in the metro areas. Sometimes there is on-site housing for immigrants in the processing facilities. 80% of the towns in Minnesota have less than 2,000 people.

20-35% of homes in rural areas are owned by people over 70. Another 40% are owned by baby boomers, the next 25 years 75% of all rural homes are going to be on the market. Transfer payments are 70% of the dollars in rural towns, retirement payments, social security.

Commissioner Albrecht asked if the trends for Southern Minnesota hold for Northern Minnesota, yes, they do. Same trends hold true.

More information related to Ben’s presentation may be found at: z.umn.edu/braingain.

Chair Hulett commented that loop trails came to mind in rural communities.

Commissioner Kennedy asked how does our work apply to this information? Winchester said there is a large increase in health and wellness interest. The growth industry is outdoor recreation industry. Recruitment is important for jobs when showing the prospective employee what you have to offer in a community beyond the shop floor. Identify the regional assets you have in a community. We are on the cusp of the biggest labor shortage ever. Employers need to get the right people from the start, then retention is easier. People move to rural areas for their safety and security.

Commissioner Pike noted this is a quality of life issue. There is interest in recreation.

Winchester noted that for baby boomers, their secondary home is turning into their primary home, it’s part of the state migration.

Commissioner J. Anderson observed that making space for newcomers and encouraging participation from minority groups. Let them make their own space, make them feel welcome.

Commissioner Schmitz feels it’s all about investments, as stewards of public dollars we need to ensure the investments we make meet present and future needs.

Chair Hulett commented we are doing that with our new System Plan. What prototypes will we have going forward.

Jeff Schoenbauer feels that the public process and outreach aren’t necessary to reaffirm what we already know. The public process is to determine what you’ve missed and what you need.

The group thanked Ben profusely for the information. He is available for presentations at other groups and may be reached at:

[BenW@umn.edu](mailto:BenW@umn.edu) and 320-589-5033

* 1. **Connecting People to the Outdoors Update – Commissioner Wilcox**

Commissioner Wilcox distributed a draft proposal from the Committee for Connecting People to the Outdoors with recommendations for moving this initiative forward and a request for a resolution that allows Commissioner J. Anderson to work through an LAC task force to determine statewide strategies and collaborative interagency projects for CPO. Allows the CPO subcommittee to devise specific strategies and design specific projects for Greater Minnesota and submit them for approval by the committee of the whole. Allows the CPO subcommittee to develop criteria for non-capital expenditures that ensures Legacy worthy impact and allows the subcommittee to preview and comment on non-capital funding requests during the ranking and scoring processes.

This initiative should be an interagency collaboration through the Legacy Advisory Committee partners. The suggestion is to form a task force with Commissioners Kennedy, Wilcox and J. Anderson leading the discussion. There has been much discussion among Commissioners within the context of the meetings but nothing has really gotten started and it’s an important function. Commissioner Wilcox stated that 17% of the DNR budget is geared to Connecting People to the Outdoors.

Commissioner R. Anderson said he did not think it was the intent to equally distribute the funds among the four pillars, that the distribution is fluid based on the needs at the time, and it was his understanding that the DNR marketing efforts are a part of the 17%. He also had a concern that if we provide funding for a project to CPO and do not continue to fund that project, will the initiative continue in the future?

Commissioner Wendorf stated the Commission is different from the state. We can fund projects that come before the Commission under the CPO function. For instance, a park naturalist to lead programs. He also feels the Executive Director should continue to be involved with the LAC committee and involved with the task force.

Commissioner Wilcox feels the task force can be the work arm for the ED with CPO and that it’s encouraging that the State Parks are bringing their naturalists to the schools as part of their outreach.

Commissioner Schmitz feels it is important to work with the LAC on this. Chair Hulett stated that Commissioner J. Anderson will continue to work with the LAC through her seat on that committee.

**Motion** by Schmitz to adopt the four points as presented by the Committee

**Motion Failed** for lack of a second.

Commissioner Wendorf did not agree with the separate scoring request in the proposal. Commissioner Mattice suggested eliminating the last bullet point and instead to change it to give the review to the ETeam as criteria they can evaluate, which is in essence the third bullet.

Chair Hulett called an end to the discussion, stating there is consensus for the first three bullet points and nothing limits the ability of the Executive Director to continue to work with the Committee on the CPO initiatives. Chair Hulett extended his thanks to the Committee for their work and focus on this issue.

1. **Unfinished Business:**
   * 1. **2016 System Plan and Work Plan Approval**

Jeff Schoenbauer provided an introductory context for the upcoming discussion on the 2016 System Plan and Work Plan. The Commission is redefining how planning is happening. The Commission is providing strategic direction on classification, criteria and protocol. The Commission will need to take on larger issues like research and discovery. Cities and counties can’t be expected to intuitively come upon these needs. Help them to be successful and reach the optimal potential. Maximize the local planning capacity to provide high value outcomes. How much can we realistically expect local planning capacity to be.

With the initiatives we’re discussing today, take the planning process deep enough to make informed decisions. When making the initial decisions make sure we’re not undercutting future decisions.

The action plans we will be working on need to be fleshed out, but not in great specific detail, but enough to make initial strides to accomplish the plans.

The system plan will eventually be a part of the DMS and will be a “living” document as we move forward.

There was lengthy discussion among the Commissioners about the plan and clarification of sections of the plan and what the priorities are. At the end of the discussion there was agreement that the plan was comprehensive and thorough and a very good update and plan for forward motion.

**Motion** by Schmitz to adopt the 2016 System Plan and Work Plan

**Second** by Kennedy

**Motion Approved**

**11.1 Action Plans for District-Level Strategic Initiatives**

At this point in the meeting Commissioner R. Anderson had to leave the meeting. Commissioners divided into work groups by District to do initial work on the Action Plans but it was later decided that this is good work for the DPCs to take on in the upcoming DPC meetings. Joe suggested we approve the strategies as they are noted in the action plans for each district and we allow the DPCs to work on these strategies. Renee mentioned that the DPCs have been asking to be more involved in the process and this is a great way for them to have that involvement, particularly as they are the people that know what resources are available to help with the strategies. Commissioners did work on the plans to create their notes to be incorporated into the strategies.

**11.2 Designation Ranking by ETeam**

This round of ETeam rankings contained the highest number of High Rank projects.

**Motion** by Mattice to approve all ranked projects

**Second** by Wilcox

**Motion Approved** with the note to change Nina Creek from D1 to D4

**11.3 Legislative Audit Report**

Mattson noted that all the Parks and Trails partners were part of the Office of the Legislative Auditors Report from July 2012to February 2015. It is an audit of the grants and a performance audit. Because the Commission is such a new entity we were simply there to make a statement as to what we have done and our future plans. The DNR and Met Council had much more detail in their audits and for the most part the systems in place are good, there were some notes on lack of internal controls. The report has been uploaded to our AWS site and can be reviewed there. We will have more to audit going forward as we are more fully engaged in the system. It is a good reminder of our legislative charge and instructive moving ahead.

1. **Consent Agenda:**

Consulting Services $26,617.22

Commissioner Expenses $2,472.03

Total $29,089.25

**Motion** by Mattice

**Second** by Schmitz

**Motion Approved**

**Meeting Adjourned**