



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Commission

Minutes for June 26, 2019

Hole in the Mountain

Lake Benton, MN

APPROVED

Commissioners Present: Tom Ryan, Tim Engrav, Bryan Pike, Barry Wendorf, Marc Mattice, Rick Anderson, Peg Furshong, Brad Bonk, Tom Stoa, Jannik Anderson

Commissioners Absent: Tim Kennedy, Rita Albrecht, Tom Schmitz

Consultants Present: Renee Mattson, Executive Director, Joe Czapiewski, System Plan Coordinator, Margy Hughes, Administrative Assistant

1. Meeting called to order at 10:06 a.m. by Chair Ryan

2. Consent Agenda:

Approval of Minutes of May 29, 2019, Agenda for June 26, 2019

Motion by Furshong

Second by Pike

Motion Approved

3. Treasurer's Report *Mattson* recommended moving funds within the current budget to better align with expenses. Move \$3500 from District Planning Committee to Commission Expenses. Move \$500 from District Planning Committee to Travel Expenses. Through May 31, 2019, balance remaining \$73,605.96, month 11 of 12.

Motion by R. Anderson

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

- 4. Approval of St. Louis County Fiscal Agent for FY20/21** *Mattson* informed and recommended that we continue to maintain St. Louis County as the fiscal agent. The fee increased from 2 ½ % to 3 % for FY 20/21. (Total increase for the 24 months is \$4510)
Motion by Bonk
Second by J. Anderson
Motion Approved
- 5. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance** Shelly Finzen, Lake Benton Valley Journal Editor; Teresa Schreurs, Director of Community Development from Development Services Inc.; Vince Robinson, President of Development Services Inc.; Lisa Graphenteen, Director Economic & Housing of Development Services Inc.; Mic VanDeVere, Lincoln County Commissioner Board Chair; Daryl Schlapkohl, Lincoln County Park System. Lincoln County Parks Schlapkohl presented group with an overview of Hole in the Mountain Park where the meeting was hosted. This designated Park in the Greater Minnesota system is still a work in progress with many plans. Beautiful setting.
- 6. Executive Director's Report** (See attachment **ITEM 6** by *Mattson*) One correction in the report in the area for **Constituent Assistance**, Proctor Hermantown Munger Trail Spur should read, "funding" application and not "grant" application.
- 7. System Plan Coordinator's Report** (See attachment **ITEM 7** by *Czapiewski*) *Czapiewski* had additional information to this report. Karen Umphress has continued to gather the Mountain Bike Planning project data for Districts 1 and 2 and having a final cleanup for coding and will have a report for the July meeting. *Czapiewski* also referred to the ongoing work from Jillian Reiner for the mapping project contract extension. (See AGENDA ITEM 10.1 in these minutes.)
- 8. Items from Members and Letters to Commission** *Ryan* introduced a letter received from Jeff Schoenbauer and shared the communications that took place between Schoenbauer and a few Commissioners. There was discussion among the Commissioners in response to this letter and for a response to the letter.
Motion by Stoa requesting *Mattson* and the *Executive Committee* compose a response draft, and email to Commissioners to review prior to the July meeting.
Second by Furshong
Motion Approved
- 9. Old Business**
9.1 Strategic Plan Update *Czapiewski* addressed a timeline for moving forward on the update and asked each of the Theme committees to set up conference calls with him to discuss the status of their Theme topics before the next meeting. Each of the

Theme committees spent some time doing further work on their Themes. This is an ongoing project.

9.2 Executive Director Contract Approval *Ryan* introduced the items covered with *Mattson* and *Commissioner Kennedy* on behalf of the Executive committee at a meeting in Duluth with *Mattson*.

Motion by *Engrave* to approve the Contract from July 1, 2019 through June 20, 2021.

Second by *R. Anderson*

Motion Approved

10. New Business:

10.1 DPC 3&4 Mapping Project Approval

Motion by *Mattice* to extend the contract for *Jillian Reiner*, *Hagstrom Engineering* for an amount not to exceed 156 hours and not to exceed \$14,040 for the work.

Second by *Bonk*

Motion Approved

10.2 Budget FY20 FY21 *Mattson* proposed categories of this budget for FY20 at \$446,000.00 and FY21 at \$456,000.00 for total FY20 & FY21 budget of \$902,000.00

Motion by *Furshong* to accept the initial budget proposal as presented for FY20/FY21

Second by *R. Anderson*

Motion Approved

10.3 40-40-20 Working Group Member Selection *Mattson* initiated conversation and reminded Commissioners that the nine member working group must have their work completed by June 16, 2020. Three members from each organization; MN DNR, Metropolitan Council, and GMRPTC will comprise the group. Discussion followed related to the composition of the three representatives for GMRPTC. Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails has requested to have one of the three spots allocated to their group. It was decided that GMP&T should submit three names with biographies for consideration and one representative will be selected by the Commission for the seat. The discussion then turned to choosing two representatives from the Commission. Commissioners *R. Anderson*, *Ryan* and *Engrav* all offered to be representatives. Following a secret ballot, *Engrav* and *R. Anderson* will represent the Commission. *Ryan* officially withdrew from consideration. *Mattson* will be the staff liaison from GMRPTC.

Motion by *Wendorf*, that the GMP&T forward a list of three candidates including a short bio and the Commission will select one.

Second by *Mattice*

Motion Approved

10.4 Amended funding requests

Motion by Wendorf to amend the trail alignment of Proctor Hermantown Munger Trail Spur Resolution 006, funding application 17-0096F.

Second by Bonk

Motion Approved

Motion by Furshong to amend the project budget for the Gamehaven Park Resolution 007, funding application 18-022F.

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

10.5 Parks and Trails LAC Benchmarks Review *Mattson* introduced the information from the Legacy Advisory Committee from their Benchmarks Committee-Recommendations for Common Measures. (See Attachment **ITEM 10.5** by *Mattson*). Discussion took place and it was recommended that we table and keep going with this discussion, keeping in mind that Equity is pertinent. Also, that it would be helpful if the benchmarks in the document be numbered for future reference use.

11. Consent Agenda Approval of June expenses

June Commission Expenses	\$ 4,220.09
<u>June Consultants & others</u>	<u>\$32,488.54</u>
Total	\$36,708.63

Motion by Mattice

Second by Wendorf

Motion Approved

12. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

July 24, 2019 Northland Regional Sports Park, Bemidji, MN

**Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission
Director's Report for June 2019**

Mountain Bike Summit Hosted by IRRRB in Chisholm

The IRRRB hosted a Mountain Bike Summit at the Minnesota Discovery Center in Chisholm on May 30. Attending from GMRPTC with me were Joe, Barry and Tim Kennedy as well as our contractor from Rock Solid, Jake Carsten. The summit drew a crowd of around 70-80 people and had good potential for wide ranging discussion. It was unfortunately not as I had envisioned the meeting would go. There were some very good side conversations around tables that led to the attached proposal for a collaborative project among city and county destination marketing organizations in districts 1 & 2. More discussion about this proposal at the June 26 Commission meeting.

Park Rx America

On May 31 I attended a meeting with other interested parks agencies in Bloomington to learn more about the Park Rx America project that the DNR is leading in Minnesota. There were approximately 20 people in attendance, primarily from the metro area. The concept is clearer to me now and I'm working with DNR to find the most efficient way to add our parks into the system so that participating clinics can proscribe a park to recreate in. There is a good website for the program <https://parkrxamerica.org/>. You can look online to see how many prescriptions were written and how many visits were made. Currently this doesn't seem to have a huge following, but many great ideas took time to catch fire.

2019 State Fair Booth

The 2019 Minnesota State Fair is quickly approaching and we're holding frequent group calls to work out the details of the booth design and layout. The graphic design is very different this year and in fact the entire room layout is quite changed from last year. Lessons learned about what worked, what was popular, what was a miss and what could be better explained led our decisions for this year. I've been working closely with the project manager to provide input and suggestions for the design elements. I'm hopeful to have a volunteer sign up schedule available at the meeting.

Constituent Assistance

- Rochester Gamehaven DNR grant application
- Proctor Hermantown Munger Trail Spur grant application
- June 25 grant site visits to Rochester parks, Quarry Hill Park and Nature Center, Cascade Lake Park and Gamehaven Park. Site visits will be done with Rochester Park staff and Audrey Mularie from DNR. Also attending will be District 6 Commissioner Tom Stoa

Legislative Work

At the invitation of Senator Ruud, I had the opportunity to attend the Legacy Amendment bill signing on June 18. Apparently, there has not been a ceremonial bill signing in about 10 years. Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan were gracious, and it was great to represent the GMRPTC at the signing, along with the other three funds.

GMRPTC
System Plan Coordinators Report
June 2019

DPC Administrative Support

The SWRDC has recommended one of their new staff, Jessica Welu, to take over the District 5 Admin role. Renee, myself and that District's Commissioners are reviewing her resume and work and will be conducting an interview after the Commission meeting.

District Strategic Initiatives

Paved Trails: Jillian (DPC3 Admin) has been working through the GIS data and creating a pro-forma map for use across all districts. We continue to figure out ways to streamline datasets. Jillian will have a proposal at the meeting for the extra time involved in getting an ARCVIEW GIS system established and the paved trail maps created for the Commission.

Mountain Bikes: Karen Umphress (MTB Trail Inventory Consultant and DPC 1 Admin) has been taking last month's feedback and cleaning up the mountain bike inventory database. She hopes to have the project completed by the end of June and will present the findings at the July meeting.

On-Site Reviews and Technical Assistance

Technical assistance meetings were held with the following agencies/facilities

- **Fertile Beltrami Sandhills On-Site MP Technical Assistance**
I met with the director and a board member at the Agassiz Nature Center at Fertile to review progress on their Master Plan. They have made good progress but have a lot of detail to work out. Also toured the facility in preparation for a possible full site review later this summer.
- **Hermantown-Proctor Project Adjustment**
Renee and I met with Hermantown City Staff to review several proposed changes to their currently-funded project. Full details will be available at the Commission meeting, centering around eliminating a couple of sections while making up the mileage in other locations.
- I will be visiting Luverne the day before the Commission meeting to discuss their progress and potential for a funding application this year. I will follow up with a verbal report at the meeting.
- Attended an OHV training meeting for motorized clubs, primarily having to do with Grant In Aid funding. I presented on the Commission, our application process and role in the system.

Funding Application Updates

As of June 23rd, there are 8 funding applications started in the portal. Don't assume this is an indication of potential final numbers. Based on total inquiries and conversations at the workshops, we should see submissions in line with the previous couple of years.

The new tutorials and updated guidance have generated positive feedback. The updated funding resolution is being implemented, however, some agencies had already finalized their resolution – we are not expecting them to go back and get them re-approved with the new version.

Strategic Plan Update

Here's a basic update from this shortened month:

Theme 1 (Criteria and Classifications): I have had a conversation with the DNR Motorized section about the proposed new classification to see what issues may be lurking. Interest was high, hope to have a more complete report at the meeting. Also working on additional text.

Theme 2 (Definition of Regional): Report will focus on the conversation from last month's meeting.

Theme 3 (Definition of Regional Trails): Report will focus on the conversation from last month's meeting.

Theme 4 (Master Plan Evaluation): Renee is preparing a report on this Committee's work last month.

June 10, 2019

Tom Ryan, Chair, and Tim Kennedy, Vice Chair
Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

I'm writing this letter to express my concern about the direction the Greater MN Commission seems to be taking relative to its legislative responsibility -- which is to undertake strategic planning, and use that to inform funding recommendations to the legislature.

My initial concern arises from Commission representatives' restrained participation at the MTB Summit. This was especially the case when the question of "who will lead" a comprehensive MTB-related strategic planning effort, with commission representatives offering no real direction or even approach other than perhaps form a committee. This was, shall we say, an awkward moment -- especially knowing that the question was obviously going to be asked. This wasn't lost on others in attendance.

I fully recognize that strategic planning is indeed challenging, especially for a relatively young organization figuring it out as it goes along. But this only heightens the importance of having the tested planning skills and experience needed to do this, starting with a deep understanding of the subject matter. Lacking that, creating a sustainable regional parks and trails system in Greater MN that will be of enduring value will prove elusive. Unfortunately, mistakes made early will only compound over time.

I apologize if my letter comes off heavy handed. That is not my intent. But given my role and knowledge of this entire endeavor, I feel it is my responsibility to express my concerns to ensure that the intent behind creating the Commission back in 2013 is fully recognized. Just sitting back and ignoring what I'm seeing through my portal goes against every professional ethic I hold important. As my ethics attorney friend told me years ago: ignoring one's responsibility (willfully or otherwise) to speak out is never an excuse and always ends with regret. At the end of the day, the fundamental question is simple: Are the Commission's funding recommendations going to have enduring value to the public?

Before I go further, I want to be clear that I have great respect for the commissioners trying to get it right for the citizens and taxpayers of MN. And have no doubt that all commissioners and consultants have every desire to responsibly carry out the duties of the commission. But the Summit, along with other recent conversations and observations, causes me to wonder out loud about the Commission's strategic planning direction and capabilities. My nearly 40 years of experience reinforces my view that critical review of planning direction at key points of organizational development is the only route to organizational success. Thoughtful 'creative disruption' can be an uncertain process, but often necessary in the public realm to maintain the integrity and status of a given agency in the eyes of the public.

Perhaps the best place to start is to take a step back and remind everyone as to how and why the Commission was created in the first place. Basically, this whole endeavor started with the 175 Study (see attached), in which the legislature required Greater MN to answer three key questions:

1. Protocols to determine the origin of visitors, and projection of potential use
2. Collect and compile details on the facilities
3. Develop evaluation protocol and criteria to determine priorities for regional parks and trails

These items were mandated by the Legislature when Greater MN was seeking more Legacy money than some Metro-centric groups wanted to let happen for various reasons. Since these questions were unanswerable on face value, we (the Greater MN group and me, as the consultant) flipped this over to

turn a weakness into a strength by using the 175 funding to create the strategic plan. That then served as the legislative "tool" for both creating the Commission (largely Al Lieffort, me, and Greater MN lobbyist leading the charge) and securing the 40/40/20 split (Tom Ryan and others on the funding team). Lacking this two-track approach that leveraged the strategic plan, there would be no Commission and Greater MN would likely have gotten less Legacy money through DNR issued grants. But be assured, it is my strong belief that if Greater MN does not do what was laid out in the 175 Study and strategic plan, reconsideration of the Legacy split is not only likely, but probably assured. Rep. Kahn, who led the legacy committee at the time, made that very, very clear to me on more than one occasion. And she was right to do so! Although she is out of office, I suspect that numerous players remain against creating the Commission and would be more than happy to have another go at the funding split, or at least make the Commission's life more challenging.

For context, the following (among others) provides two specific examples that highlight my concerns.

MTB facilities system planning

With the exception of Tim Kennedy, the lack of engagement by commission attendees was surprising. This was most poignant when the last slide popped up that is a textbook definition of strategic planning and the Greater MN Commission members, executive director, and planner in the room had nothing to say. The fact that the current activities the commission is pursuing with respect to MTB facilities was not offered as part of the discussion was also a bit bewildering. Sharing information was the whole point of the summit, which nearly 100 people attended.

This was especially poignant when Rock Solid's consultant came up to me *after* the summit with a list of questions about MTB planning that should have been asked as part of the discussion to allow everyone to weigh in. If Greater MN ends up distributing guidelines essentially instructing advocacy groups on how to plan MTB facilities, and that is done in a vacuum outside of a thoughtful strategic planning framework, you are setting yourself up for problems. You'll end up with lots of plans and funding requests that you encouraged (and gave them the recipe for) without any knowledge of the short and long term supply and demand for these facilities. So you'll be stuck between a rock and hard place with numerous Greater MN constituents wanting funding while at the same time legislators eventually catching on and asking what justification do you have for recommending grants for more MTB facilities. Left unchecked, the MTB system will end up just like the paved trail system in Greater MN: Unsustainable and often underused. Whoever is sitting in the seat to explain all of this to some future legislative committee is going to have a truly hard day. Trouble is, the damage to the integrity of the Commission will have already occurred.

Paved trails system planning

One of the most perplexing planning challenges in Minnesota is addressing the paved trail system that is increasing unsustainable and, of equal importance, misaligned with public *trail* needs and wants. The DNR has come to recognize, too late, that this is a very real problem that won't go away easily until someone along the way is willing to bite the bullet and take it on. It won't be easy. So, their interim approach is to create tiers, with DNR focusing on a limited number of destination trails, with all others greatly reduced in terms of priority (and funding).

I participated in debating the DNR paved trail strategy as part of Future Strategies Committee. I felt that they needed to be more forthright with the public about the reality of this, especially the fact that many

of the trails on the books are never going to happen. Their decision was obviously to pursue the current approach, but the problem doesn't really go away. Just pushed down the road.

Unfortunately, many of the non-destination trails will be, by default, at least in part, the commission's problem to solve. Here are some raw numbers (approximates):

- DNR destination trails = 10 (these are the ones they see as the primary trails. Not many per se, but actually might be about right from a sustainability perspective.)
- Core trails = 31 (under two tiers, and are the ones that will be minimally maintained or that "partners" more or less find the money for, which is really the commission because there is no other real source)
- Greater MN system thus far = 14 (best I can tell from the website)

So, doing the math, Greater MN is looking at 45 trails in its geographic viewshed that are in various states of development, disrepair, need of general maintenance or simply not funded. Many of these are really not that well vetted, with no real path forward. And many may not even be wanted by the public, as determined by *actual* use levels on like trails. Although data is, unfortunately, still limited, the recent counts for the Paul Bunyan Trail are telling (see your website): less than 1 person per day per mile of trail (84 miles). Not good in that that same dollar could have perhaps been used for developing a much more valuable trail, such as a real loop around Lake Bemidji, that would likely get much higher levels of regional and tourism use.

To be sure, I suspect that all the agencies that have managed to get parks and trails on the Greater MN regionally significant list are happy. And many are indeed viable. But that alone is a false benchmark of success in that it's easy to keep people happy when you're doling out money, especially when it comes to in-the-moment advocacy groups and local politicians wanting to bring money to a district. But the true measure of success in the long term is to know, not hope, that planning efforts lead to creating a sustainable system of enduring public value.

The DNR's situation is not where you want to end up, with the agency being many, many millions of dollars in an unsustainable infrastructure hole with zero path out of it. The fundamental miscalculations or lack of critical review of planning practices decades ago now has to be dealt with by current players. Not fun, I know for a fact. The behind the scenes discussions I've had with DNR people over the years, and during the future strategies process, was enlightening and fair warning of how things can go badly if you're not constantly on guard regarding your own organizational effectiveness over time.

So, I strongly encourage the Commission to have the hard and perhaps uncomfortable discussion now, so that you each have a clear perspective of the commission's strategic planning direction, the depth of your planning expertise and how to best accomplish its legislated intent.

Thank you. Let me know if I can be of further value in having this debate. The attachments are added for additional context.

Sincerely, Jeff Schoenbauer,
Schoenbauer Consulting, LLC

Attachments: 1) MTB summit presentation; 2) counting initiative; 3) MRPA presentation regarding commission



July 24, 2019

Response to Schoenbauer letter dated June 10, 2019

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission appreciates the work done by Schoenbauer Consulting during the nascent years of the Commission. However, the Commission believes the viewpoints represented in the documents and the letter dated June 10, 2019, do not fully nor accurately reflect the Commission's work product of the past six years. The Commission is firm in its belief that the work of the Commission, as established in Minnesota Statutes 85.536 has been done in accordance with the statute and meets all expectations of the legislature.

The GMRPTC is a dynamic organization and always seeks to improve its protocols, examine the work product and enhance its value to the residents of Minnesota who benefit from quality parks and trails in their cities and counties.

Several issues raised in the letter are not relevant to Commission work or the Greater Minnesota system, and are simply conjecture with no facts or data to prove the statements. The suggestion that there is a lack of engagement by the Commission and its representatives to work collaboratively is a falsehood. While Schoenbauer Consulting may believe the method to achieve success is to be proscriptive, the Commission believes that a collaborative and respectful relationship among partners will foster a better outcome for all involved.

The Commission will continue to work with partner organizations, stakeholders, and the public to provide assistance, support and planning initiatives for parks and trails throughout Greater Minnesota system.

Submitted with approval into the meeting minutes of July 24, 2019

Marc Mattice, Secretary Treasurer

Rick Anderson, Executive Committee