



## Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

**Minutes for April 28, 2021**

Sobieski Park Lodge - Winona

**APPROVED**

**Commissioners Present:** Tom Ryan, Rick Anderson, Ted Suss, Jonathan Wolf, Tom Stoa, Matthew Hill, Bryan Pike, Peg Furshong, Barry Wendorf, virtual, Tim Engrav, Beth Pierce, Jen Foley

**Commissioners Absent:** Brad Bonk

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

- 1. Meeting Called to Order by Chair Ryan at 10:02am**
- 2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance:** Chad Ubl, Alicia Lano and Brad Budnick, city of Winona.  
Commissioners were given an interesting presentation on the city of Winona Parks and their evolution. Winona owns 1,400 acres of parkland within the state of Wisconsin, an unusual arrangement. The presentation provided an overview of the designated Bluffs Traverse Park.
- 3. Approval of Agenda for April 28, 2021, Minutes from March 24, 2021 and Treasurer's Report through March 2021,** with the correction to the minutes from March 24.  
Commissioner Pierce was not in attendance. Under the Treasurer's Report was an approval of renting a storage unit for the Commission's accumulating gear and reports.  
**Motion** by Wendorf  
**Second** by Suss  
**Motion Approved**

#### **4. Executive Director's Report**

*Mattson* added supplemental information to update the Commissioners about the Legislative session. *Commissioner Pike* asked for more information about the presentation that was done during the April Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee meeting. *Mattson* made a presentation about the designated Milford Mine Memorial Park in Crosby and will share the presentation with the Commissioners. Discussion continued regarding the Pop-Up Kits that were developed by the PTLAC for partners use at events and activities in Greater Minnesota, DNR and Metropolitan Council.

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

Designation applications and master plans are coming into the system for review. One designation application has come in this month along with two master plans. All would like to be reviewed by the ETeam and approved in time to make funding applications in the FY23 funding cycle. We hope to see a proposal for the next phase of the DMS work in time for the May meeting. Adding capacity is the most important part of this next phase.

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

*Pierce* – nothing

*Engrav* – parks and trails in the north are expecting a busy season again this year. The BWCA is seeing a great number of reservations again this season.

*Foley* – viewing the meeting virtually it seems the OWL is working very well.

*Hill* – liked the presentation from Winona and hearing about the establishment of a recreation base for the city. Crosby is seeing positive improvement for the city all related to the trails that have been built in the area.

*Wolf* – enjoyed the hike in the bluffs and seeing what Winona has been developing.

*Pike* – just back from Florida and nothing to add.

*Stoa* – many positive changes in Winona. Mentioned one of the visionary people in Winona, John Latch, who was instrumental in buying much of the land that is now parkland in Winona.

*Anderson* – Garvin Heights has a connection to Lyon County through Garvin, who was a railroad man and established several parks, among them Garvin Park in his district where there is still a trust account from which they can draw funds.

*Wendorf* – master plan for Springvale Park has a designation of High and they hope to apply for regional designation.

*Furshong* – save the date for July 17, the bi-annual Tall Grass Bio Blitz. Lac qui Parle Park will be featured. Collaborative event with several partners that draws 200 people. It is a free event and will be conducted with COVID restrictions in mind. Every bio blitz they have done has set records. Also looking at doing a night astronomy survey the night before. Family friendly event.

*Ryan* – thanked Anderson for taking over during his absence.

## **7. New Business:**

### **7.1 Master Plan Update for Hole in the Mountain Park**

Czapiewski reviewed the master plan update for the park. The Original score was 352 and the score after the update is much higher at 398, the biggest increase for a plan update thus far. There was great enthusiasm for the update and the improvements that will be made. The Evaluation Team was very pleased with the update and this is reflected in the higher score. There are some questions to be answered, 8' trail width rather than 10' width which is required. The cause for the width was to keep the trails narrower to protect some of the resources near the trail. Discussion about how the issue should be addressed.

**Motion** by Suss to approve the new master plan score of 398.

**Second** by Anderson

**Motion Approved**

### **7.2 Executive Director Contract 2021-2023**

Ryan described the process and the steps that have been taken to review a contract renewal for Mattson. Goals for 2021-2023 were shared with Commissioners. Discussion related to staffing needs now and in the future for the Commission, is additional administrative support needed?

**Motion** by Suss to approve a new contract for Mattson to run July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023.

**Second** by Pike

**Motion Approved**

### **7.3 Approval of Statewide Trails Mission Statement**

Includes large sections of the state that do not have trails in particular areas. Record the aspiration of the Commission that the next iteration of the map will include Northwest and Southwest areas of the state.

**Motion** by Suss

**Second** by Anderson

**Motion Approved**

### **7.4 Approval of Strategic Plan Printing Expense**

**Motion** by Hill

**Second** by Wendorf

**Motion Approved**

### **7.5 Discussion of future Commission Meetings**

Mattson explained the future of commission meetings with the changes that have been suggested for upcoming meetings. Suss would prefer all meetings to be held

via zoom unless there is a destination visit component to the meeting. Wolf prefers in person meetings unless the meeting will be short. Furshong, it affords us the opportunity to meet in person. Let's be flexible with the technology and operate as needed moving forward.

#### **7.6 Contract with Karen Umphress for Information Update**

**Motion** by **Motion** by Wendorf to approve the contract for \$10,790.00 out of the District System Planning Budget

**Second** by Furshong

**Motion Approved**

#### **7.7 Approval of 2021 Mountain Bike Count and Survey**

Considering the Hispanic community in the Detroit Mountain area, Furshong wants the survey translated into the Spanish language. Suggestions were made to reconsider the proposal to include the language translation. Hill notes that we have the option to address the language bias. Furshong notes that we approach this from the front end using the language bias and data to support the added cost using the District System Planning Budget.

**Motion** by Anderson to approve the Parks and Trails Council and use the second language surveys

**Second** by Furshong

**Motion approved**

### **8. Old Business:**

#### **8.1 Approval of Strategic Plan**

**Motion** by Anderson

**Second** by Engrav

**Motion Approved**

#### **8.2 Approval of Strategic Plan Rollout**

Czapiewski reviewed the planned schedule of the District Workshops in coming months as well as the proposed agenda. Furshong asked how the workshops will be promoted. Kick off will be in the press release along with a sign up component so people can register for the individual workshops. Link to the online version of the Strategic Plan will be provided. Past DPC members will be invited. Need to circulate the schedule for Commissioners to look at their personal calendars. Commissioners chose not to vote on the rollout, viewed as a housekeeping issue. Furshong questioned if we should be having these meetings at night so that more people might be willing to attend. Czapiewski stated that because most of these are going to be people seeking to apply for designation they have staff to attend

these workshops. Furshong suggested we have a nighttime option. Czapiewski will add a seventh workshop to accommodate those needs.

**9. Approval of Expenses**

Pike stated April expenses for approval

Consultant Expenses: \$46,783.29

Commission Expenses: \$4,360.78

Total \$51,144.07

**Motion** by Hill

**Second** by Suss

**Motion Approved**

**10. Meeting Adjourned**

Next meeting – Detroit Mountain Recreation Area on May 26, 2021

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

Partner Meetings

- GMPT Communications Committee
- GMPT Membership Committee
- GMPT Trail Count Forum
- PTLAC April meeting. Virtual meeting, hosted by GM. Presentation on Milford Mine Memorial Park, slide show with narration
- PTLAC Liaisons Monthly Meeting
- PTLAC Statewide Trails Committee Call
- PTLAC Benchmarks Committee Call
- Calls and inquiries with various constituents

Legislative Meetings

This legislative session has been productive in that I don't need to drive to and from Saint Paul for 15 minutes of testimony or monitor a committee hearing. It's been very helpful to be able to listen in on committee meetings and track the progress of our bills. I've worked with Representative Lillie and Senator Ruud to add language to the Legacy Omnibus bill in the House and Senate to extend the PTLAV Coordination with Partners funds for another year. Language has been added in the House version and Senator Ruud has committed to helping us add the language during conference committee reconciliation.

DMS Phase IV

Phase IV is complete, and Joe and I are very pleased with the results of the enhanced reporting capabilities. We have started discussing Phase V with the Full Circle team and are excited at the continued improvements to the DMS.

A proposal will be arriving soon with cost estimates for Phase V. Full Circle has been a great partner, helping us achieve a robust reporting system and building a more user friendly application process for our partners.

PTLAC Streetlight Data Researcher

I was part of the interview team for the data researcher job that generated more than 80 applications. Joel Huting, the Met Council Research Manager, and others on his team conducted 10 first round interviews and referred four for second interviews. One candidate withdrew and the three remaining were interviewed on Monday and Friday of last week. Any of the three are qualified for this position. A final decision will be made on April 26 and we plan to have the hire start the first part of June. As a reminder, this position is working out of Met Council to conduct visitor counts using Streetlight Data for all parks and trails in the Met Council, DNR and GM systems. The job is being paid for out of the Coordination Among Partner Funds.

### Mountain Bike Count and User Survey RFP

The RFP was released on April 7 with responses due by April 21. There were two respondents, the Parks and Trails Council and the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission in Duluth. While we did not have a target cost set for the project, I was anticipating it costing around \$30,000. One proposal came in at \$29,600 with an optional cost included of \$1,400 for translation and the other at \$21,577. I'm still reviewing the proposals which will be discussed in detail at the meeting. We did have input from Joel Huting who not only provided Met Council RFPs but also reviewed our RFP and made helpful suggestions.

### Hole in the Mountain Site Visit

Commission Suss joined Joe and me for a visit to Hole in the Mountain Park to review their updated Master Plan components and tour the park. This is a lovely park in Lake Benton and their Master Plan is significantly improved in comparison to the original plan.

**GMRPTC**  
**System Plan Coordinators Report**  
**April 2021**

**Funding Application 2021**

As it typical, funding applications start slowly but ramp up toward the end of the first month. There are currently two funding applications started in the system, although we know others are underway at the local level. I have had in-depth conversations with at least 8 agencies over the last month about their plans for funding applications. So far the conversations are great – and the Connecting People to the Outdoors incentive is spurring some creative conversations. I anticipate that we will once again have a good batch of applications this year.

**On-Site Reviews and Technical Assistance**

April has been an exciting and active month for technical assistance and reviews. Our initial goal was to have an ETeam meeting in April that would cover about four Designation Applications and/or Master Plans. Due to the status of several planning processes, we ended up with one Master Plan Update (Hole in the Mountain) and are gearing for five more applications/plans to review in May with the ETeam. This will be the last set of potential designees that could come in under the wire for a funding application this cycle, if designated.

Renee, Commissioner Suss and I conducted a Master Plan Update site visit for Hole in the Mountain Park, which by many accounts showed significant improvement over their original Master Plan. Remember, this plan update is one that you funded out of Legacy funds to help with their facility design and maintenance/operations plan. That information is included in this month's agenda. Potential reviews up for next month include Duluth, Otter Tail County, Mankato, Frazee, and Sherburne County.

Our new pre-application function on the DMS is also helping us keep better track of potential new designation applications. In the first month of operation, we have had conversations with 5 new potential designees that have made it onto the system. Two of those have the potential to be included in the May review.

**DMS Next Phase**

Renee and I met with the Full Circle team to discuss the next phase of Data Management System development. We are generally in agreement that it will have two main parts:

1. General updates to align the system components with the Master Plan update (MP layout, update criteria questions, add Track 2 evaluation).
2. New Data Collection and Analysis options. We are hoping to add an internal survey and update system so that our local partners can be directed to update key information when prompted, rather than having the system go stale. Capacities are also needed to better input and manage the coming wave of quantitative and qualitative user data of many types, such as Streetlight data, our MTB survey, or any trail counters or local surveys that partner agencies complete.

We are waiting on a draft proposal from Full Circle as we continue negotiations on this phase.

**Partner Contact Maintenance Contract Proposal**

Renee and I have been considering adding capacity to “catch up” with some of our ongoing, low-level partner agency contact needs. We have solicited and received a proposal from Karen Umphress of UP! Outside, who has served the Commission as DPC1 Administrator and as the leader of the Mountain Bike Trail Inventory project, to fulfill this contract. Her skills are well suited to this task, which includes phone and email contacts to:

- Update partner agency contact information in the Data Management System; as local staff changes, sometimes we don't hear about it until later when there is an issue.
- Guide partner agencies to update their facility information in the MN Great Outdoors website. The information on that site is now over a year old, while some was never entered at all.



- Update basic facility inventory data in the Master Plan portal for each agency. Some of this information was collected in last winter's agency survey, however the data received was inconsistent and not always completed thoroughly.

This item is on the agenda for April.

### **Strategic Plan**

I have only received a couple of minor typo edits from Commissioners for the Strategic Plan update. As the Commission determined last month, you will be making any final recommendations and approval to the Strategic Plan at the April meeting. Renee and I have been developing a "rollout plan". This will entail production and distribution of several hundred hard copies, online publication and announcements, and a series of District-level Zoom workshops to be held in May and June (prior to the funding application deadline). We have been working with Greenfield Communications on a press release, to be published when the hard copies of the plan have been produced. The plan for the workshops will be introduced to you at this meeting, including your role in each of the District-level workshops.