



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Minutes for October 28, 2020

Sartell Community Center

Sartell, MN

APPROVED

Commissioners Present: Tim Engrav, Beth Pierce, Bryan Pike, Rick Anderson, Ted Suss, Barry Wendorf, Jonathan Wolf, Tom Ryan, Tom Stoa
Attending via Zoom: Matthew Hill, Peg Furshong, Jen Foley and Brad Bonk

Commissioners Absent: None

Evaluation Team Members Present: Dennis Fink

Kathy Bergen, Ron Bastian, Wayne Sames and Bob Bierscheid via Zoom

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

- 1. Meeting Called to Order by Vice Chair Anderson at 10:03am**
Vice Chair Anderson chaired meeting until Chair Ryan arrived at 10:17am
Meeting Goals Welcome to all in attendance and those via video.
- 2. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance:** None
- 3. Approval of Agenda for October 28, 2020, Minutes from September 23, 2020 and Treasurer's Report through September 2020**
Motion by Engrav
Second by Stoa
Motion Approved
- 4. Executive Director's Report**
In addition to the written report submitted previously there was a discussion of the Funding Work Group and the agreed upon apportionment split or 40-40-20. Discussion around a bill for funding the Commission operating budget out of the general

fund. Agreement to submit the bill with the understanding this will be a difficult environment for success given the budget shortfall due to COVID.

5. System Plan Coordinator's Report

Inquiries related to designation and master plan are starting to increase again as municipalities have started to consider their planning activities for the future.

6. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission

Engrav, in his travels Yosemite has instituted a cap on admissions, it's made a difference in the park.

7. Old Business:

7.1 FY22 Funding Application Review/ETeam Participating

Czapiewski reviewed the discussion he and *Mattson* had with the ETeam, which resulted in great feedback and comments about each of the applications. Ultimately the discussion did not change the order or the scores and was a good affirmation of the scoring process by the consultants.

Czapiewski went on to review the list of projects, with the assumption that we will provide the entire list of projects in priority order due to not having a firm idea of what the final MMB projections will be. *Stoa* questioned that approach and further discussion ensued. *Mattson* affirmed this is the first time we would provide all the projects, there is a feeling we would likely be able to fund two projects beyond the top eight if tax collections continue to come in stronger than projected. *Wendorf* suggested it may be important to make previously funded projects a priority where we reduced their award to balance/extend funding dollars. The new funding application from those previously reduced projects inherently will not score as well with major portions of the project removed. Commissioners agreed.

Following thorough discussion, the decision was made to recommend the top eight scoring projects with two additional projects recommended if funds are available.

Priority List:

- Luverne Loop & Blue Mounds Trail
- Moorhead River Corridor Midtown Trail
- Mesabi Trail Rehabilitation
- Winona Bluffs Traverse
- Wright County Connect People with the Outdoors
- Nisswa Gull Lake Trail
- Lake County Mountain Bike Trail Split Rock Connection
- Sunrise Prairie Trail

Alternates:

- Sandstone Robinson Park
- Olmsted County Oxbow Park and Nature Center

Motion by Stoa to recommend for funding the top eight projects and if additional money becomes available, add the two alternates of Sandstone Robinson and Oxbow in that order.

Second by Pike

Motion Approved

Discussion about the meeting in November. It will be a Zoom meeting on the normal meeting date, November 25, but will be shorter in length, one to one and a half hours as there is not a great deal of pressing business to attend to.

8. New Business:

8.1 Evaluation Team Meeting

Discussion about the proposed new policy for non-infrastructure projects. In three parts:

1. Contracting and long-term management
2. Defining project deliverables
3. Collecting and sharing results

ETeam considered documentation and recording of these projects. For contracting and long-term management apply the same process, follow state and local requirements, the local governments should be able to manage it. Also, important to share the results of these projects with the public.

Should be a section in the application that addresses what you expect will happen (CPO) and what the outcome was.

Suggestion that there might be a team to review projects after the contract has been written to ensure the deliverables have been met.

Robust discussion around invasive species management and control and the reporting required as part of the contracting.

Equipment replacement discussion – timeline to keep the equipment and inventory and reporting for CPO grants.

Discussion of this section captured in the Non-Infrastructure Project Management Policy.

Commissioners warmly thanked the Evaluation Team for their contributions as well as for their time and attention during the application process.

Ryan stated that he has asked *Mattson* to prepare a calendar for the meeting schedule for 2021 as well as to prepare an agenda for the work list for the upcoming year. *Mattson* and *Czapiewski* should prepare an outline of the topics that need to be addressed during 2021.

8.2 FY22-23 Budget

Mattson shared the projected Legacy collections for FY22-FY23 and asked that the Commission consider requesting an operating budget of up to 5% of the legacy

funds apportioned to GM. This will represent a decrease in the operating budget which is appropriate given the lower tax collections expected and allow GMRPTC to direct more dollars into the grant fund. We need to provide guidance to DNR on our budget needs as they include our budget request within their change sheets.

Motion by Engrav to accept Mattson's recommendation

Second by Anderson

Motion Approved

9. Approval of September Expenses

Commission Expenses:	\$2,082.03
<u>Consultant and other Expenses:</u>	<u>\$25,915.69</u>
Total	\$27,997.72

Motion by Suss

Second by Wendorf

Motion Approved

10. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

November 25 meeting will be virtual and held from 10:00am to 11:30am

11. Adjourn

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission
Director's Report for October 2020

Funding Work Group

DNR Commissioner Strommen and Metropolitan Council Chair Zelle and I had a call October 13 which ended with an agreement to continue the 40-40-20 funding allocation and the 1% allocation for the work of the Parks and Trail Legacy Advisory Committee for the FY22-23 biennium, with the understanding that one additional biennium, FY24-25 may be necessary. We agreed it was crucial to reach an agreement to send to the Governor for approval with budget deadlines looming.

The nine funding work group members negotiated in good faith and worked hard to reach an agreement. They were hampered by an inability to meet in person due to COVID, and the Met Council stance they need to attain a larger share of the funding.

Partner Meetings

- GMP&T Membership Committee Call
- GMP&T Communications Committee Call
- PTLAC Liaisons Agenda Prep Call
- PTLAC Liaisons Monthly Call
- PTLAC Benchmarks Committee Call
- PTLAC Statewide Trails Committee Call
- PTLAC Greater Minnesota Representatives Call – we have three appointed members for Greater Minnesota and I wanted the four of us to have an opportunity to get to know each other better
- PTLAC Inclusion Committee Call
- GMP&T Annual Meeting and presentation
- PTLAC Bi-Monthly Meeting
- Jillian Reiner/Joe call to work on possible trail alignment for the PTLAC Statewide Trails initiative. GM is providing the technical assistance to look at potential routes for a North/South and East West trail alignment.
- Evaluation Team Meeting to review funding applications

Site Visits

- Detroit Mountain Recreation Area grant close out visit with Mai Neng Moua. DMRA has seen a large increase in users over the summer, as have all of the areas we've talked to.
- Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp site visit with Joe and Mai Neng. The campground project is proceeding well after some initial complications related to blasting for the utilities in the shower building. Big Falls will be requesting a project scope modification due to the inability to bring sewer to the new campsites.

Designated Facility Survey

Joe and I have been working on a survey of all our designated facilities. It became clear during the funding work group discussions that we need better data on the Greater Minnesota system. The survey queries the size of our park, trails and special feature facilities, both as existing and planned, programming, volunteer hours, operating budget and what discussions/policies they have in place to address racial equity. Of the 64 facilities only three have not responded to date. More work needs to be done yet as to how to provide this information to you at a future meeting, but the data is interesting and provides a good snapshot of our system to date.

DMS Phase IV

Work is underway to start the Phase IV improvements/enhancements to the DMS. This phase will include more administrative functions, data realignment and improved analytics. We're also incorporating the skeleton for a future Customer Relationship Management component that will vastly improve our ability to track projects and applications.

FY22-23 Budget

Coordinating with DNR to provide the budget change pages for inclusion in the DNR budget to the Governor. We have until November 15 to provide the final change page. It is acknowledged the May budget forecast, during the early days of the pandemic, was based on more dire predictions. Indications from MMB are that the November forecast will be an improvement over May's forecast.

GMRPTC
System Plan Coordinators Report
October 2020

2020 Funding Applications

A Funding Application review meeting was held with the Evaluation Team on Sept 30. The review was very valuable for the insight it provided on several projects, particularly as to how they fit into the larger picture of the Commission's work and how we can improve the process next year. While our views on some projects may have changed, the review ultimately did not impact the scoring or priority listing for this year's applications.

Connecting People to the Outdoors Contracting and Review

Following last month's Commission meeting, I started to craft a response to the discussion about how to handle the contracting, management, and ongoing review/maintenance of various non-infrastructure projects. Examples include Connecting People to the Outdoors programming, events and equipment; invasive species removal; and prairie restoration.

After consultation with the ETeam and our lead DNR contract manager, we have started to draft a policy and procedure framework for these types of projects. At the October meeting we will focus our ETeam/Commission discussion on how best to think about, contact and manage these types of projects. Next month will include a more concrete policy framework for review.

On-Site Reviews and Technical Assistance

Several agencies were provided with technical assistance or on-site reviews during the past month.

- Renee and I conducted a site review of the ongoing construction project at Big Falls Horse Camp and Campground, funded two years ago. Given its site along the river, significant archeological issues are requiring modifications to the proposed plans.
- The Legacy funded Master Plan update for Morrison County's Belle Prairie Park has been completed and uploaded to the DMS. We have begun our review process, which will include the ETeam re-scoring this updated Master Plan.
- A new Master Plan for Warroad is nearing completion and is expected to be ready for review at the same time as Belle Prairie Park.
- Sherburne County has approached us with a couple of technical questions as they consider a new trail designation application. While a couple of other current partners have done the same, Sherburne does not currently have any facilities in our system.
- I also attended the GMPT annual meeting, which included several of our current and potential parks/trails partners. It's prudent to point out that three video presentations were made by corporate sponsors, and all of them (parks consulting firms) did an excellent job highlighting just how much work they have done on GMRPTC system facilities. We should acknowledge that we are fortunate to have so many excellent technical partners helping our local partner agencies with their plans, development and construction projects.

Partner Agency Survey

We have conducted a basic inventory survey of all our partner agencies/facilities. The goal is to gather needed information about size, infrastructure, programming and usage for the coming legislative session and related contacts. As of this report, we have received completed surveys for 61 of our 64 facilities, which is a fantastic response rate. We have begun to analyze the information for a complete presentation and report at the November meeting.

Strategic Plan Update

Chapter 4, which will cover the Master Plan creation and review elements, will be ready for review by the ETeam at a November meeting before going to the Commission. Mapping elements are, well, WOW. Minor errors are being corrected in the mapping as they are found, which is expected to be an ongoing condition for the size and decentralized nature of our system. If you haven't already, be sure to check out the interactive map at <https://www.gmrptcommission.org/our-work.html>.

Trail Data Collection

I attended a webinar hosted by the America's Trails organization about data collection on trails. It was a great review about the process and lessons learned in three different projects and covered multiple types of trails. The presenters also highlighted the need to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, sharing several techniques for doing so.

The timing of this information is important in two different ways. One is that MnDOT has released its new Bikeways and Trails Data Standards for public review, which we will be participating in. The other is the ongoing need to provide better support for our partner agencies in collecting data that tells the use story across our system. As we continue to review the DMS for future expansion, being able to frame out just what types of data and methodologies for use collection are possible is going to be critical for that project. Renee and I will start to work on a policy framework for Commission discussion at a future meeting.

DMS Phase IV

Renee and I met with Full Circle Group to kick off a series of weekly meetings in support of this data reclassification project. Discussion points currently include:

- Data reclassification to reduce redundancy, improve reporting, and improve the structure for future portals or datasets. Renee and I will be going through every data item to verify its need and placement.
- Creation of a pre-planning app. This would allow us to better capture conversations with potential applicants prior to their initial designation application. Currently, there is no central way to store and share that data, similar to a CRM-lite.
- Improved data insights and analytics. This will include preparation for future modules/portals such as direct GIS system integration, surveys, easy data updates (i.e. provide more structured methods to capture local staff changes, etc.), and park or trail user metrics (streetlight, surveys, counts).