

**Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission
Meeting Minutes for November 26, 2014
Sartell City Hall**

Approved 12/17/14

Members Present: Rita Albrecht; Mike Hulett; Al Lieffort; Marc Mattice; Keith Nelson; Bryan Pike; Anita Rasmussen; Tom Ryan; Tom Schmitz; Barry Wendorf; LuAnn Wilcox

Bill Bruins attended remotely.

Members Absent: Rick Anderson

1. The meeting was called to order by Chair Al Lieffort

2. Motion by Nelson, second by Hulett: Approve the minutes of October 22, 2014. **Carried.**

3. Approval of the Agenda

Motion by Wendorf, second by Schmitz: Approve the agenda as written. **Carried.**

4. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance

The Chair recognized Roger Landers, DPC member from District 2, who attended the meeting to learn more about the Commission and its work. He reads the meeting minutes on the web page and reported that they are very informative.

Laura Preus, Policy Programs and Planning Manager, DNR Parks & Trails Division

Jeff and Kathy Schoenbauer, Schoenbauer Consulting LLC

Joe Czapiewski, JFC Strategic Services (serving the commission as System Plan Coordinator)

5. Unfinished Business

5.1 - Communications Plan

Members reviewed and discussed the revised Communications Plan submitted by Anita. Discussion items included the web page and the need for state e-mail addresses for Commissioners. Marc and Anita suggested using Google Plus; LuAnn will look into this and other options, and consult with state IT services. Tom S. said that neither the state home web page nor the Secretary of State web page has a listing for GMRPTC. He suggested that the Commission have more visibility and recognition as a state entity in addition to its presence on the Legacy website. Mike will assist Anita with further development and implementation of the Communications Plan.

Mission Statement

Four Commissioners submitted draft mission statements prior to the meeting. LuAnn felt that input from all members is valuable and suggested this item be revisited at the December meeting. Tom R. suggested a formula for achieving consensus and will facilitate the process.

6. New Business

6.1 - Review of ETeam issue #9 - Applications for motorized recreation as primary use

The ETeam reported that applications for regional designation were not evaluated and scored if motorized recreation was the primary use of the facility. The *Strategic Plan* states that the "DNR will take the lead in defining this classification, along with any accompanying protocol and criteria to be used for evaluating and determining the merits of any projects fostered in Greater Minnesota." *Minnesota Statute 84.03* grants authority to the DNR "to provide for regulated use of off road vehicles (ORVs)" and provides management funds through license receipts and gas tax revenues. The *Strategic Plan* also directs the Commission to "work collaboratively with the DNR on siting and managing off-road vehicle use areas."

Motorized recreation is integral in the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*, and members agreed that these are "special uses" to be included in the *Statewide System Plan* under development. Concerns were raised about how Grant-in-aid funding might be affected, but it was noted that those funds assist in maintenance and operations, and require a 35% local match, while Legacy funds would focus on improving existing facilities. Attention to motorized recreation also addresses the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing for facilities that are "unencumbered by physical limitations."

Members agreed that the Commission will work closely with the DNR as a "co-equal" in vetting plans and projects, developing systems and evaluation criteria, and partnering with key stakeholders. The Commission will create a separate category for destination parks and trails that accommodate motorized recreation as a "special recreation feature." The Commission will also collaborate with the DNR most closely on trails that have been identified as "partner-led" in the *Division of Parks and Trails System Plan*.

Laura expressed that the DNR is encouraged about partnering and collaborating with the Commission. She reported that DNR system planning did not exclude motorized recreation and that some Legacy funds were used for projects in Greater Minnesota to mesh with the Grant-in-aid process.

Motion by Ryan, second by Schmitz: Modify the Strategic Plan to acknowledge that motorized recreation projects will be considered and evaluated on the merits of the plan. **Motion carried.**

6.2 - Review of ETeam issue #8 - Applications for mountain bike trail or park system

The ETeam did not evaluate applications for regional designation that were specifically for mountain biking as the primary use, noting that they should be ranked and scored in accordance with a Statewide System Plan for this special use. Members were referred to page 46 of the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* which identifies key planning considerations for a Mountain Bike Trail Network.

Commissioners agreed that mountain biking will be included in the system plan under development, but that applications for regional designation need to be evaluated on their merits. Because it is a special use requiring special features, mountain bike trails and parks are "less population center driven and more dependent on destination qualities," necessitating specific planning strategies. This evaluation phase is only to determine which projects qualify as being regionally significant. Which facilities will be included in the Statewide System Plan, and then which are eligible for Legacy funding, are separate matters to be addressed by the Commission in consultation with the District Planning Committees. Once evaluated by the

ETeam, the Commission will work with stakeholder groups and the District Planning Committees to determine which projects to move forward within local, regional, and state contexts. Members agreed that similar special uses, such as fat tire bicycling, will be included in this system plan, and that evaluation criteria can be referenced in *Trail Planning, Design and Development Guidelines (MN DNR 2006)*.

Joe will work with Anita and Mike (Communications Plan sub-committee) to issue response letters to all applicants for regional designation, acknowledging the issues around special uses and unique situations which the Commission is working to resolve.

6.3 - System Plan Report to the Legislature

Schoenbauer Consulting submitted a draft *System Plan and Work Plan* for submission to the legislature by January 15, 2015. It describes the work accomplishments of the Commission over the past year since its inception, and the results of the initial Regional Designation Process. The work plan for 2015 includes: improving information management and developing online processes linked to the GoMN inventory system; planning initiatives for mountain biking and motorized recreation; coordination of planning efforts pertaining to regional trail interconnections and their relationships to state trails; research and performance measurement methodology. The report concludes with an outline of administrative needs and further organizational development objectives, with associated budget expenditures.

The report illustrates that organizational work performed during 2014, and system development in 2015, enables the Commission to assume the role of granting authority for Parks and Trails Legacy funds in Greater Minnesota, beginning with the 2016 appropriations. Allocations of these funds were administered by the DNR during the first five years of Legacy funding. Projects were selected among those submitted and subjectively evaluated because no cohesive statewide system was in place to adhere to. Going forward, the Commission will design an integrated system of parks and trails based on trends, demographics, needs and demands, solicit projects that fit the plan and fill gaps, and evaluate proposals based on objective criteria.

Members expressed concern that applications received for regional designation were concentrated around larger population centers and may give the impression that the Commission isn't addressing equitable geographic distribution. It was noted that larger population centers have the luxury of paid professional staff who are able to pursue funding opportunities and submit proposals. This demonstrates the essential role of the Commission and District Planning Committees in working with less populated cities and counties which might have been neglected in the past.

Members asked that a one page Executive Summary cover page be drafted to include: top scoring projects; expectations/next steps; administrative needs and organizational development. The Executive Summary will be on the back side of the full page map of Commission districts. The final draft of the summary and full report will be submitted for Commission approval at the December meeting.

6.4 - Information Management System

Schoenbauer Consulting distributed a concept plan for a web-based information and application system, with portals for regional designation of parks and trails, and funding proposals, which will be integrated with the GoMN mapping and inventory system. Based on the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council model, it is designed to make application

processes easier and more manageable. It will provide more information and clearer instructions without the "visual clutter" of the paper system, and will enable remote access to all documents and information for Commissioners, the ETeam, and stakeholders.

Jeff, Kathy, and Al will meet with Houston Engineering on December 4 to solicit their technical advice and assistance, and asked that Commissioners send comments or feedback via e-mail.

7. Consent Agenda

Rita reviewed the bills and claims as follows:

- JFC Strategic Services	4,192.04
- Schoenbauer Consulting	2,403.25
- Clerical Services	1,000.00
- Commissioners expenses	1,466.67

Motion by Albrecht, second by Nelson: Approve the consent agenda in the amount of \$9,061.67
Motion carried.

8. Items from members

Mike showed members a magnetic nametag he had made to identify himself as a Commissioner on the GMRPTC, and offered to have more made for other members at a cost of \$15.00 each. It was suggested that they be made for all members in January, when the new slate is seated.

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for December 17, 2014.

Motion to adjourn was made by Bruins, second by Wilcox. **Motion carried.**

*All motions are carried unanimously unless otherwise noted. Motions which are not unanimous are recorded in the Vote Tally Journal.