

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Minutes for November 23, 2016

Sartell City Hall, Sartell, MN

APPROVED

Commissioners in Attendance: Mike Hulett, Marc Mattice, Tom Ryan, Tim Kennedy, Keith Nelson, Rita Albrecht, Bryan Pike, Barry Wendorf, Tom Schmitz, LuAnn Wilcox, Jannik Anderson.

Commissioners Absent: Peg Furshong, Rick Anderson,

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

1. Meeting called to order at 10:05 by Chair Hulett

2. Approval of October 26, 2016 Minutes:

Motion by Wendorf

Second by Kennedy

Commissioner Pike, Milford Mine Park funding discussion is not captured correctly. The minutes should reflect the funding recommended does not include the marketing, site preservation or Memorial Wall, it did include the other elements for a total of \$60,000. Commissioner Wilcox, under item 10.2 a correction that anything on the agenda be in the minutes and be reflected whether it was tabled or discussed.

Motion Approved

3. Treasurer's Report:

Motion by Schmitz

Second by Nelson

Grant administration looks higher due to a partial administration fee from the previous fiscal year being included in the current budget.

Motion Approved

4. Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Schmitz

Second by Wilcox

Motion Approved

5. Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance:

None

6. Executive Directors Report:

The new Legislative report will be expanded to eight pages from four. It is intended that the new piece be more educational and more multi use than last years. There is some duplication; two maps that are redundant for instance. Please share thoughts on what you might like to see in the report. Commissioner Albrecht would like to know the top five purposes of the piece to ensure we have the correct message and what the purpose is. Would like a map that shows what we have going on in the state.

Mattson – the piece is intended to provide more context as to what we’re looking for regarding designation, funding and master plan information. Along with the information we are required to provide to the legislature. The last piece also called out that high ranked applications are in the process of achieving designation.

Commissioner Wendorf would like to have the actual trail for designated trails noted in the map rather than a point on the map. Mattson agrees, it’s a priority to have the actual trail described on the map.

Commissioner Nelson feels that with the committee chair changes on both sides, in the first few weeks of the session particularly, the piece be used to educate new legislators and new committee chairs.

Commissioner Albrecht concurs with Commissioner Wendorf that we need to better show what we’re doing and we need to better describe the process. She also felt that trails on a map of the scale we have would not be large enough to really show up on the map. Could the recommendations be inserts that are changed out?

Commissioner Pike wants the trail to be showed in its entirety rather than just the part that is being funded. Mattson – the entire trail will be shown, not just the piece being funded.

7. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission:

Chair Hulett did receive correspondence from someone representing the Dakota Rail Trail and wanted time before the Commission. Hulett feels we don’t have the time to turn our meetings into advocacy for particular projects. We should limit the time for those wanting to speak about a project to three minutes.

Commissioner Schmitz, the half percent tax was extended, pending legislative approval. Many important projects will be funded with this tax.

Commissioner Albrecht got a call from an applicant distressed that they have to do an appraisal for their acquisition. She explained the reasons why they would need to do the appraisal.

Commissioner Pike, there was a strategic planning meeting for the Brainerd Lakes Area, parks and trails projects. Including the expansion of the Cuyuna Mountain Bike Trails.

8. System Coordinator's Report:

DPC 6 meeting was held last week, the meeting was well attended, recently attendance in this District has been light, and it was encouraging to see better attendance. This district is a little behind the other districts in their planning efforts. Work was done on the Zumbro water trail strategic initiative, this initiative is moving forward however. Joe also attended the Brainerd strategic initiative meeting, which was also very well attended. Joe had an informal meeting with the Brainerd Parks and Rec Director. Minnesota River Valley initiative meeting was held to try to identify if there are enough participants to move this forward. 10-12 people participated and were enthusiastic about this initiative and trying to move planning for the entire Minnesota River Valley forward. Joe and Renee will be attending a meeting with Duluth Parks and Recreation next week.

9. Old Business:

9.1 FY18 Funding Discussion

Mattson introduced the session and turned this portion of the meeting over to the Schoenbauers. Jeff provided context and background on the statutory language that established the Commission. Regionalism in the metro is completely different from regionalism in Greater Minnesota. Strategic investments with high values will become harder and harder. There will be about \$154 million over the remaining life of the Parks and Trails Legacy Amendment to be spent in Greater Minnesota. Jeff is more and more concerned of the risk of the Commission being overextended and unsustainable. Some of the newest designated parks and trails come with high price tags. Feels we need to avoid being a granting agency and picking projects based on what come in the door based on some judgment and tie those investments back to what is strategically in the best interest to do.

When we make recommendations, it's based on the best judgements at the time and information available. Jeff feels the Commission was set up first and foremost as a planning agency.

There is anecdotal evidence that there is still potential to build mountain bike facilities in the state, but it's anecdotal, there is no hard fact to support this. How fast and how much risk does the Commission want to take when expanding trails in the state. There will be risks if we want to take this on.

What we fund must tie back to the strategic plan and the strategic point of view. The designation process and ETeam work was never intended to happen without further review. Cascade Lake Park is clearly a regional park; the Luverne Loop has been traditionally considered a local trail. If this is the direction the Commission wants to go then be prepared for other local trails asking for the same thing. There is not enough time or money to go deep on research. We don't have the luxury. How much time and support do we give entities so that they don't make a mistake?

Commissioner Kennedy previously talked to Jeff in the context of how our system is evolving. What is our agenda on creating and selecting projects for funding? He isn't clear and thinks the Commission may not be clear as to how the system is evolving. He's seeing some disparities and how does that reflect back to the Commission when a few of the districts have several projects and a lot of funding and others do not. He wants to have a conversation about these disparities, are we picking projects but not really creating a system?

Chair Hulett thinks it important to look at each individual project and how that particular project affects the system as a whole.

Jeff said some of the projects were specifically geared to jump start discussions, in District 5 for example, so things could start moving forward. Funding is not a yearly cycle. Work with the applicants of these parks and trails to add strategically when they are ready to go.

Commissioner Ryan said his understanding of the process is that the larger cities will be ready to go sooner given that they have larger planning agencies. Rochester parks were ready to go with three applications, but his smaller county was not as well prepared to move forward. But this was likely what some of the Commissioners had anticipated happening.

Chair Hulett; Moorhead is also able to move ahead with projects because they had people on staff to put a master plan together for their designations.

Commissioner Kennedy feels it's important to recognize there are challenges with disparities in Districts 1, 2 and 5 and how do we build parks and trails in those districts that satisfy the regional needs in those districts? Without a weighted system, we could find ourselves struggling over time.

Jeff thinks we need to be clear to the legislature that we are working with the people in these districts to find the good projects and help. They won't get done on their own.

Chair Hulett noted that there are some projects that scored very well by the ETeam, but where do the 13 people on the Commission come in?

Commissioner Pike feels we rushed into designating too many parks and trails.

Chair Hulett, what are the reactions of the Commissioners to this point?

Commissioner Albrecht, comment on what Jeff said. Should we be paying attention to the strategic plan?

Jeff feels that Pike is right. Of the 18 parks and trails designated in July and September, seven in his mind shouldn't be on the list. The Commission needs to do more due diligence.

Commissioner Albrecht, how do we ensure a system plan that is evenly dispersed?

The DPC process isn't working the way it should. We should get more counties and cities and elected officials together and tell them about the process; here are the

opportunities; what do you want to work on in your area. There are not as rich a discussion as there could be when you go out to the areas.

Commissioner Schmitz has not had the time to go out and visit the parks and trails applying for designation or funding and he thinks there is still low hanging fruit out there.

Commissioner Nelson is not in agreement that there were mistakes in identifying parks and trail, it's a part of the process. There were decisions made based on the information available at the time. Given where we started and where we are today there has been a lot of progress made and he does not agree with the idea that mistakes were made. The designations were made based on the information available.

Commissioner Pike doesn't feel they were mistakes, we are in the process of learning. There is value in waiting and not designating a lot at one time.

Commissioner Wendorf wants more information available when discussing designations, it would be helpful to have visuals to make the decision. To

Commissioner Kennedys distribution of funding; the first round had more in District 4 because they were ready to go, but others are catching up.

Joe, we are all struggling with these issues; but we've put a lot of thought into them.

He likes the idea of Commissioner Albrecht to bring more people into the process.

Perhaps even not opening up the designation process but inviting facilities to apply.

Jeff, there have been struggles with how to fit the DPC into the process. The Commission needs to do outreach to the districts. When you get out of the well-staffed areas there is more need for outreach to find the gems.

Commissioner Ryan; be quick but don't hurry. At the beginning, we had much to accomplish and maybe we hurried but it was out of necessity.

Jeff discussed the handout with the funding recommendations in the strategic context. Refer to the handout provided for the methodology.

Discussion following the strategic context was followed by the discussion of funding requests for FY18.

Lake Wobegon Trail – Fund at \$980,000, less \$120,000 for wetland credits. The contact for this project has been notified and is expecting of the change to the funding award.

Moorhead River Corridor – Fund at \$660,600, less \$50,150 for benches and waste receptacles. Moorhead has committed to funding these elements themselves.

Big Falls Campground and Horse Camp – no funding for FY18 but a priority funding project for FY19. There is no formal appraisal on the property and this is necessary

to have complete before it can be considered. There were concerns expressed that the funding application is not clear regarding appraisals and what is expected. This needs to be corrected in future funding applications.

Detroit Mountain Recreation Area - \$1,246,000, less \$363,000 for a non-contiguous parcel acquisition.

Cascade Lake Park - \$1,550,000, funded at the full request.

Mesabi Trail - \$750,000, funded at the full request.

Tioga Recreation Area - \$50,000 for planning and construction documents to enable them to make a fully vetted funding request in FY19.

Kensington Park – not funded for FY18. Wait on more funding until this project is built out. Kensington received funding for the interpretive center.

Milford Mine Memorial Park - \$60,000, funded less \$60,000 for marketing, site preservation and memorial wall.

Memorial Park – Funded at \$595,613, less \$95,250 which was redirected to fund the Cook County Mountain Bike Trail request.

Dakota Rail Trail – Funded at \$647,000 for a segment of trail. McLeod County will provide a match for this project.

Lake Brophy Park – Funded at \$875,000 for infrastructure work.

Robbins Island Park – Recommendation to fund at \$606,347. Discussion suggested by Mattson that the park not receive funding and the dollars there be redistributed. Discussion ensued regarding this suggestion.

9.1 Continued

Jeff, Cook County Mountain Bike Trails are ready to go so if the decision is made to fund the request he can see the validity in that decision.

Commissioner Pike feels it is important to have the maintenance in place when a trail is funded because trail maintenance will not be paid for out of funding requests.

Red Lake River Corridor – no funding in FY18

Twin Lake Park – no funding in FY18

Plum Creek Park – no funding in FY18

Woodland Trail Park – no funding in FY18

Lake and Cook County Mountain Bike Trails – Commissioner Kennedy feels that spending \$50,000 for a study on mountain bike trails is not the best use of funds and that the meeting in Duluth in October was inconclusive. \$33,000 is available that is outstanding at the end of the funding requests and could be redirected to this project.

Commissioner Nelson

Motion to take \$100,000 out of Robbins Island Park and \$33,000 out of the reserve along with the \$50,000 for the Mountain Bike Planning work and fund the Cook County Mountain Bike Trails development. Pulled out of consensus agenda for more discussion later.

Hartley Park – no funding in FY18

Robinson Park – no funding in FY18

Robbins Island Park – Commissioner Nelson suggested taking \$100,000 of this project as well to fund the Cook County project.

Proctor/Hermantown Trail Spur – no funding in FY18

Gamehaven Park – no funding in FY18

Cannon Valley Trail – no funding in FY18

Luverne Loop Blue Mounds Trail – no funding in FY18

Decision was made to move to Old Business 9.2 Pending Designations.

9.2 Pending Designations

Motion by Nelson

Discussion

To approve Mesabi Trail, Barn Bluff Park, Robbins Island Park for designation and to not approve Prospector Loop Trail at this time.

contingent upon meeting the qualifier recommendations of the consultant team.

Mesabi Trail must update their Master Plan and have performance measurement and participation.

Barn Bluff Park the Commission's planner should initiate a review meeting with the City to review the master plan in detail to understand the details and to ensure that its potential is maximized through the sharing of ideas and any research or trend information that is available that would enhance outcomes. Make sure the master plan is of the highest quality possible and begin the process of understanding how the Commission can realistically work with cities and counties to ensure that parks and trails truly achieve their highest potential. This park should be used to initiate the important debate about regional versus local level responsibilities to fund a given park or trail relative to its regional value.

Robbins Island Park the key challenge that this park presents for the Commission is determining the level of regional funding that is justified relative to the park's regional value. The Commission needs to carefully consider the regional versus local value of developing this park and come to agreement with the City in this regard. The Commission's planner should initiate a review meeting with the city to go over the master plan to ensure that the ETeam's concerns are addressed and its potential is maximized through the sharing of ideas and any research or trend information that is available that would enhance outcomes.

Prospector Loop, consistent with the ETeam's comment, the trail warrants regional designation but only after the numerous issues cited by the ETeam and recommendations are addressed. The applicant should be required to participate in research and performance measurement initiatives as pursued by the Commission.

Second by Wilcox

Motion Approved

Motion by Nelson to 1. approve what we agreed upon by consensus, minus Lake/Cook County, minus Robbins Island and minus Memorial Park and fund the Lake/Cook County Mountain Bike Trails at a level of \$183,000. And 2. fund Robbins Island Park at a level of \$606,347. Two motions to be voted on separately, a split vote.

Second by Pike

Amendment by Wendorf to remove \$100,000 from Memorial Park and fully fund Cook County request. Chair Hulett clarified the motion: approve the consensus items; except Robbins Island Park, Memorial Park and Cook County Mountain Bike Trails.

Motion Approved

Motion by Nelson (second motion) to fund Memorial Park at \$590,863 and Robbins Island Park at \$606,347 and Cook County Mountain Bike Trails at \$283,000, with the understanding there would be an excess to perform a study if necessary on the Lake County Portion.

Second by Ryan

Discussion

Commissioner Kennedy clarified that the Cook County request is for \$278,250. It was discussed that we cannot fund more than requested in a funding application. Commissioner Albrecht questioned why the \$33,000 was added. Commissioner Nelson stated it was the recommendation of the Executive Director to take the amount that was remaining and add it to the Cook County request to get closer to the funding request. Commissioner Albrecht also questioned Commissioner Wendorf why Memorial Park was \$100,000 less. Commissioner Wendorf clarified that each line item had contingency, design fees, survey and permits should be local responsibility. Commissioner Albrecht asked how the \$100,000 reduction to Robbins Island Park would work? Would that put them at a disadvantage. Chair Hulett asked how that would impact the park. Mattson responded that there are areas in the funding request that could be value engineered to make the request work. There was further discussion about how the Commission arrives at funding request reductions without appearing to make the reductions in a capricious and arbitrary manner?

Commissioner Pike doesn't support funding a project for more than requested and could not support this motion.

Commissioner Ryan suggests that the role of the "13" be partially predicated on the discussion with the Schoenbauers earlier in the day. How do we take the complex issues surrounding the discussion and react to them? This discussion is related to a course correction and make changes as necessary.

Chair Hulett noted we have had a day of good critical thinking and professional input. It has been a great discussion and a thoughtful effort. The 13 different points of view from 13 different people is a good thing.

Nelson amended the original motion to remove \$4,750 from the Cook County request to bring the funding to \$278,250, the amount of the original request.

Second by Ryan

Discussion

Commissioner Albrecht questioned why the \$200,000 that was removed from the two projects is not being distributed more evenly across other projects. The Robbins Island match is significant so why do we remove \$100,000 from their request? We must act in a way that our partners can trust us. There was further discussion that we did not fully fund all projects. We had three times the requests as available funding and cuts had to be made to enable the Commission to fund projects the best way we can to move more projects forward. We try to make a difference where we can.

Commissioner Schmitz questioned the funding to Cascade Lake, which was the full request. The project has a bigger match than the funding request. He further asked if we could grant the Commission funds for planning and studies.

Motion Approved

Motion by Nelson to add \$4,750 to Milford Mine’s request

Second by Ryan

Discussion

Commissioner Pike suggested using the excess funds for benches on the Moorhead River Corridor

Motion Failed

Motion by Ryan to bring in a consultant at the January meeting establish an agenda and retool for the future given the challenges we are facing.

Second by Nelson

Chair Hulett said a motion is not necessary and directed the Executive Director to plan the January meeting, hire a consultant and proceed with planning an agenda.

Motion by Schmitz to add \$4,750 to Granite Falls Memorial Park, bringing the total funded to \$595,613.

Second by Albrecht

Motion Approved

10. New Business:

10.1 Financial Assistance for Master Plan/other work in Districts

10.2 District Strategic Initiatives – how to proceed?

10.3 Report on Memorial Park Master Plan

10.4 Vacancy on Legacy Advisory Committee

There are three appointees on the Legacy Advisory Committee. Commissioner J. Anderson has chosen not to apply for another term. There has been interest from Commissioner Wilcox to be appointed to that seat. Cathy Bergen and Wayne Sames are two of our seats. Mattson suggested we ask people to submit applications as there are Ad Hoc seats available.

Motion by Ryan to take applications

Second by Kennedy

Motion Approved

11. Consent Agenda:

Consulting Services	\$21,821.88
Commission Expenses	\$2,221.77
<u>DPC Expenses</u>	<u>\$54.00</u>
Total	\$24,095.65

Motion by Mattice

Second by Schmitz
Motion Approved

There was not enough time left in the agenda to adequately address the remaining agenda items. No action was taken on 10.1, 10.2 or 10.3.

12. Next Meeting and Agenda Items:

Sartell City Hall – December 28, 2016