

**Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission
Meeting Minutes for March 20, 2014
Sartell City Hall**

Approved 4/23/14

Members Present: Rick Anderson; Bill Bruins; Mike Hulett; Al Liefkort; Marc Mattice; Keith Nelson; Bryan Pike; Anita Rasmussen; Tom Ryan; Tom Schmitz; Barry Wendorf; LuAnn Wilcox

Members Absent: Rita Albrecht

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

2. Approval of Minutes

LuAnn noted that the minutes for February 20 incorrectly stated that work performed by Jeff Schoenbauer in 2013 was completed December 8. That will be corrected to reflect work performed through December 30.

Motion by Wendorf, second by Pike: Approve the minutes as amended. **Motion carried.**

Addition to agenda under new business: discuss a request from the Rural Development Commission.

Motion by Schmitz, second by Hulett: Approve the agenda as amended. **Motion carried.**

3. No members of the public were in attendance.

4. Presentation regarding DNR System Planning by Laura Preus

Laura attended the meeting in place of Courtland Nelson, who was unable attend.

She provided and discussed the following:

- FY 2014 Park and Trail Grant Solicitation Summary
- PowerPoint presentation describing a general overview of system planning processes
- System Plan Briefing
- System Plan Guiding Principles and Roadmap
- Developing a System Plan: State Parks and Trails Investment Groups

Responding to a 2012 request by the legislature to devise a strategy which focuses public investments on Minnesota's most important natural resources and highest quality recreational opportunities, the DNR convened work groups and stakeholders, developed criteria, engaged user groups, and drafted a plan. The plan is undergoing final revisions and will be completed later this year. By engaging the commission in dialogue regarding the draft plan, the department intends to refine the plan for use in guiding our shared work through 2016.

The DNR system includes: Parks; Trails; Forest Recreation; Water Recreation. Four work groups were convened under those categories. Using the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan as the "driving force," along with the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan, Metropolitan Council planning documents, and departmental research as the foundation for their work, the groups collected objective criteria for each site.

The data was then analyzed to group sites into low priority; moderate priority; and high priority categories. While operations and maintenance remains at least a moderate priority across all sites, those with an overall low priority will generally have fewer amenities and the department may seek to develop partnerships with local units of government and/or user groups to service them. Higher priority sites, also referred to as "destination-focused" or "high amenity" sites, are those that receive more and broader use, and offer a high quality user experience. Those sites will have more services and amenities, higher staffing levels, and receive a greater share of departmental resources.

The anticipated result of this analysis is the strategic investment of funds that will provide guidance and direction to regional DNR staff and inform decision making regarding the allocation of resources. "Collaborating with partners is key, and with this commission in particular." This analysis reveals where opportunities exist and resources are needed to augment the DNR systems with strategic local plans and investments. The commission will be instrumental in designing and developing a well-integrated system of regional parks and trails which feed into and connect with state systems. As a result, "measurable improvements that advance Better Government" will be realized.

5. Unfinished Business

5.1 - Operating Procedures - Section V.B - Project Proposal Evaluation Team

This item was tabled until the discussion regarding District Planning Committees is completed.

6. New Business

6.1 - Schoenbauer Consulting

Working drafts of the following documents were distributed for discussion:

- System Plan Development Timeline
- Implementation Timeline
- District Planning Committee Operating Guidelines
- District Planning Committee Application Form
- Request for Designation as a Regional Park, Trail, or Recreational Facility
- Regional Parks and Trails Evaluation Team Application Form
- Discussion/Work Item Memo

The commissioners and consultants agreed that organizing the District Planning Committees (DPCs) is the most immediate priority. Open house meetings will be conducted during June and July to disseminate information and recruit DPC applicants. **To that end, the consultants will submit final documents related to DPC formation for approval by the commission at its April meeting.**

Some commissioners expressed concern that one meeting will be insufficient to attain the desired breadth of involvement over large geographic areas, and suggested holding at least two per district. All agreed that achieving a diversity of representation with regard to gender, ethnicity, geographic distribution, skills, and backgrounds is valued. In order to achieve the type and level of participation needed, more outreach through various means, as well as other avenues for input, will be necessary.

Updating the Strategic Plan is underway, relative to the formation of the commission. Maps were revised to reflect the new structure and district boundaries. Research methodology, particularly around visitation data, is being revised. LuAnn asked that labels and language be simplified to be consistent throughout, and redundancies eliminated, so that references to entities or processes are clear and concise.

With regard to the suggested annual meeting schedule and key activities timeline, LuAnn referred to the statutory language which mandates that District Master Plans be developed, after which a public hearing is to be held on the proposed plan. District plans are to be integrated into, and coherent with, a statewide system plan developed by the commission. She suggested that District Master Plans should come before an "open submittal period for new applications" and then projects that fit the master plan be solicited. She cited MN Statue 85.536, Subd. 7: "In recommending grants, the commission shall make recommendations consistent with master plans." Jeff Schoenbauer said the commission should "avoid the perception that there would be pre-qualified projects."

Tom S. said there may be some confusion because the term "master plan" is also used to describe the detailed development plan for a specific park or trail site. He suggested calling that a "unit master plan" and

the initial idea submission a "concept application." He also suggested that a template for District Master Plans be designed to ensure consistency in and among all six districts.

Additional comments regarding the annual timeline were received and will be used to make revisions.

Tom R. offered to hold an initial informational meeting with key stakeholders in District 6 and invited Jeff and Kathy Schoenbauer to attend. Feedback will be provided to the commission at its April meeting.

In addition to outreach through media outlets and organizations, and letters of invitation to cities and counties, referrals and interested individuals will be directed to apply for membership on the DPCs via e-mail to the commission at gmrptcommission@gmail.com. Information and application forms will be made available on the legacy web site in May: legacy.leg.mn.us.

In a spirit of cooperation and cohesion, each DPC will have a DNR staff liaison, and commission districts abutting the seven-county metropolitan area will also have a liaison from Metro Regional Parks. These liaisons will serve as advisors, and as channels for communication and information, but will not have voting privileges. For continuity, the commission prefers that these liaisons be seasoned personnel who are familiar with park and trail system planning, are interested in being a part of the process, and are likely to see the system design process through to 2016.

Motion by Schmitz, second by Nelson: The Chair shall request that the DNR appoint a staff liaison to each District Planning Committee. **Motion carried.**

6.2 - 2014 Meeting Schedule

Due to scheduling conflicts, it became necessary to change the meeting day of the commission.

Motion by Hulett, second by Pike: The regular meeting day for the commission shall be the fourth Wednesday of each month, commencing with April 23, 2014. **Motion carried.**

6.3 - Commission Credit Card

Motion by Hulett, second by Schmitz: The commission authorizes Chair Al Lieffort to secure a credit card in his name for the purpose of making purchases necessary for the conduct of commission business. **Motion carried.**

6.4 - Communications including Letterhead, PowerPoint, Maps

Additional comments and suggestions were discussed to be included in further revisions.

6.5 - Commission/Coalition/Caucus Confusion

In an effort to dispel confusion, formal communications of the commission will first provide the full name as Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission, and be referred to as the commission in the remainder of the text.

6.6 - Legislative Update - Additional funding for the Commission

Al said he was approached by Representative Kahn, Chair of the House Legacy Committee, who told him "If you need more money, tell us." He explained that the state has a budget surplus that also results in surplus legacy funds. The ambition of the commission is to implement the DPC and Project Proposal Evaluation Team processes this year, and develop the District Master Plans and statewide system plan within the next two years. The commission estimated that an additional \$150,000 to \$200,000 would enable the completion of that work within that timeframe.

Al stated that "This year's allocation includes 4%, which is \$320,000, allocated to the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails system being used by the DNR to run the grant program." In next year's appropriation cycle, he expects that "We will be in conflict with them next session on that 4%. We will be saying that should be given to the commission next year."

LuAnn said that the DNR could be useful in grant oversight and execution. Al said that fiscal accountability could be administered by the DNR, the Legislative Citizen's Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), or directly through the commission.

In this regard, Laura said "The DNR understands we are in a transition here, with changing circumstances, and we are supportive of that. We have a group of highly professional grants staff. They could continue to perform those financial responsibilities for the commission, understanding that would be in a different role." She offered to work with the commission about what types of services the DNR could provide and asked for as much advance notice as possible regarding those decisions.

Laura also said that "This year, the 4% was on the competitive grants only, not the legislatively authorized ones. Previously, it was 4% on all of them, so it was a significant drop in dollars and [they] were feeling that crunch."

Al will work with Rick and Anita on a budget request for additional funding to administer the intense initial capacity building work of the commission.

6.7 - Rural Development Commission (RDC)

The RDC requested that a representative of GMRPTC attend their meeting on April 24th in St. Cloud to present information about the work and processes of the commission. Al will work with Jeff Schoenbauer to complete and "polish" the PowerPoint presentation prior to April 24th.

Motion by Schmitz, second by Bruins: Commissioner Mattice will represent GMRPTC to present information to the RDC at its meeting on April 24, 2014. **Motion carried.**

7. Consent Agenda

LuAnn distributed a treasurer's report of expenses through February 20, 2014 and a detail of Consultant Services for 2013 which were approved at the February 20 meeting.

Motion by Nelson, second by Hulett: Approve expenses as submitted **Motion carried.**

8. Items from Members

Rick reported that a conference call was scheduled to discuss GMRPTC appointments to the Legacy Advisory Committee (LAC) and the expiration dates of current terms. Al noted that he signed the Memorandum of Understanding, along with Erika Rivers (DNR) and Arne Stefferud (Met Council).

Motion by Wendorf, second by Schmitz to adjourn the meeting. **Motion carried.**