



Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

Virtual Meeting

Minutes for March 27, 2024

APPROVED

Commissioners Present: Tom Schmitz, Rick Anderson, Jen Foley, Brad Bonk, Jonathan Wolf, Beth Pierce, Tim Engrav, Rob Mason, Barry Wendorf, Peg Furshong, Reid Huttunen and Karlin Ziegler. This meeting was held virtually due to severe winter storms throughout state.

Commissioners Absent: Tom Stoa

Consultants Present: Renee Mattson-Executive Director, Joe Czapiewski-System Plan Coordinator, Tess Dandrea-Administrative Assistant

1. **Call to Order – Chair Anderson** **10:02 am**

2. **Acknowledge Members of the Public in Attendance** – Jennifer Swenson, Prairie Woods ELC, and Kathy Gauger, Prairie Woods ELC Governing Board, New London MN.

3. **Approval of Agenda for March 27, 2024, Minutes from January 24, 2024 and Treasurer’s Report through January 2024**
 Motion by Engrav
 Second by Mason
 Motion Approved

4. **Executive Director’s Report – Legislative Update**
 Our bill to extend grant deadlines for Hole in the Mountain, Hormel Nature Center, Winona Bluffs Traverse and Alexander Ramsey Park, as well as the Coordination Among Partners fund is moving through Committees. We don’t anticipate any issues. The same bill also contains the request to distribute the surplus Legacy funds in FY25 rather than waiting until FY26. There is a National ADA Symposium being held in Minneapolis June 9-12, 2024. This conference was brought to our attention by Commissioner Foley. Mattson requests the Commission to allow her and Czapiewski to attend the conference as it would be helpful to be better informed about ADA issues and requirements.
 Motion by Schmitz to approve attendance at an amount not to exceed \$4,500.

Second by Ziegler
Motion Approved

5. System Plan Coordinator's Report

Czapiewski stated a partial launching of the FY26 funding portal coming April 1, there is one more video tutorial to be uploaded. The toolbox has been updated and the portal looks good. He is working on GMRP&T forum, video presentations, and is improving written tutorials and changes for this year

6. Items from Members and Letters to the Commission

Nothing new to report from Commissioners: *Mason, Engrav, Bonk, Wendorf, Ziegler, Furshong, Wolf, Pierce, Foley, and Anderson*. *Commissioner Schmitz* reminded everyone about the MRPA convention in Mankato the last week September. *Commissioner Huttunen* not in the meeting at this time.

7. New Business

7.1 Designation Application Owatonna Regional Park 24-001D

Motion by Engrav to accept high ranking.

Second by Mason

Motion Approved

7.2 Designation Application Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center 23-010D

Chair Anderson questioned how much the county is involved and the answer was quite a bit. Commissioner Furshong stated it has great educational significance as it is year-round, and kids are bussed in from quite a distance. Swenson stated interpretive elements, past archeological surveys, educational offerings, and master plan need updating. Commissioner Wendorf is excited to have our first Educational Learning Center (ELC) and inquired about whether future acquisitions will be forthcoming. Chair Anderson supported as did Commissioners Wendorf and Engrav.

Motion by Bonk to accept high ranking.

Second by Engrav

Motion Approved

10:44 am Commissioner Huttunen joined meeting

7.3 Designation Application Cannon River Wilderness Area 22-012D

It is close to other facilities, but challenges exist due to lack of maintenance. Chair Anderson asked about metrics on who is visiting from the Twin Cities particularly those with horses. Coordinator Czapiewski and Furshong stated facility may be underutilized for horses.

Motion by Foley to accept high recommendation.

Second by Schmitz

Motion Approved

7.4 Master Plan Application Updates

No action needed at this time. We are using the A, B C grading system for each section of a master plan and it is working well.

Camden Trail Regional Plan has many great features that are already built out. Three sections had issues which was discussed afterwards during site visit. Evaluation Team sent sections back for additional work as plan still needs to address issues and opportunities. Basically, they just work through the process and realize things can change in 15 to 20 years. **Hok Si La Park** is in a similar position and also had some sections sent back for rework. Commissioner Furshong had question on water levels and Czapiewski said they need to plan for sustainable management.

Chair Anderson stated past projects show our grading system works and the process just needs to be understood and followed. Mattson thinks they will both be good additions and that the Master Plan contributes to the over-all good of facility.

Commissioner Bonk said it has good connections and Chair Anderson thanked those Commissioners who attended the site visits.

7.5 Czapiewski Contract 2024-2026

Chair Anderson thinks Czapiewski's contract is reasonable and appropriate to the budget. Czapiewski does a great job and the contract and work plan are well thought out. The new contract term is from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2026.

Motion by Engrav to approve contract and workplan for System Coordinator, Joe Czapiewski as presented.

Second by Schmitz

Motion Approved

7.6 Resolution 031 Winona Bluffs Traverse Project Scope Change

While we no longer fund invasive species removal some projects began before this policy changed making this project eligible for the additional work requested. Change in scope to redirect the \$30,000 in funds that was going to go for trail construction

Motion by Schmitz to approve the resolution to redirect funds

Second by Furshong

Motion Approved unanimously by roll call vote

7.7 Resolution 032 Kensington Rune Stone Project Scope Change

The project scope change is for \$10,630.76 remaining after better than expected cost for concrete work. Change will enable more sidewalk to the pavilion which will get a new concrete floor and additional landscaping at the discovery site.

Motion by Wendorf to approve the resolution to redirect funds.

Second by Mason

Motion Approved on a roll call vote with Bonk abstaining

8. Old Business:

8.1 Non-Infrastructure Project Management Policy

Czapiewski led discussion about changes to a policy adopted in 2021 regarding programming, policy natural resource mgmt. He recommended word changes

including an amount of free equipment use days for those who want to try out equipment but might not be able to afford it or are in underserved communities. Discussion ensued about how to manage free use days. Also discussed were the differences between facilities and what types/seasons of equipment available for rent. Many factors need to be considered, example: weekday vs. weekends, days per month, weather dependency, seasonality, flexibility, events, inventory size, along with tracking and accountability. Mattson suggested if we don't create a policy for free use days the decision may be taken out of our hands and dictated by policy changes to our statutory language per discussions she's had with legislators. Following discussion it was determined that language should be crafted based on the feedback/discussion and included with the new policy.

8.2 Art in the Parks Update

An RFP was issued by the DNR and the lowest bid accepted with Forecast. Next step for us is to decide where to place artists? An option would be to hire an artist to work with a cluster of parks or hire a traveling artist that two or three facilities would share. Commissioner Wolf suggested perhaps a cluster can cross promote. A series of images in different facilities might increase visitation to some facilities who may need it. Travel is viewed differently in Greater Minnesota where an hour is not considered a long drive.

Mattson stated we are not bound by districts or rules at this point. Commissioner Furshong said the Art Communities already have this in place for art clusters in regions that have lodging and or office/working space and offered to help Mattson with that. A question arose if the artists would be able to sell their products in parks? Mattson said not set up to sell art but rather to teach crafts or create art for a specific park. Pierce confirmed we would select where clusters would go. The administrator we hired would facilitate contracts and we would determine the facilities. Decisions would be based on facility interest as not all have the staff or ability to do it.

Question was asked if dance and drama were eligible projects and yes, they are. This is a work in progress.

8.3 Round Two Funding Application

Surplus Legacy funds are available to deploy. There is the Wright County Grant recapture of \$145,920 is available immediately and the DNR is returning the administrative charge of \$11,875 annually so we have \$157,795 available to grant now. Also, the FY25 funds from the Legacy surplus will be available July 1, 2024 if the legislation passes. As well there is the DNR administrative fee of \$11,875 again available for a total of \$1,979,215 for FY25.

Chair Anderson brought up Track Chairs as a possible use and Commissioners Bonk and Engrav think CPO grants might be a good use for these funds. There seemed to be a consensus on CPO usage, so Chair Anderson asked if there was any opposition to putting the \$157,795 out now, hearing none, he gave direction to Mattson and Czapiewski to move forward and disperse funds. At this time, they are not aware of immediate needs, but they will reach out to grantees.

9. Approval of February and March 2024 Expenses

February	\$25,140.21	Consultants/other
March	\$30,628.98	Consultants/other
	\$887.70	Commissioners

Motion by Schmitz

Second by Foley

Motion Approved

10. Next Meeting and Agenda Items

No meeting in April.

Next meeting will be May 22, 2024

Stearns County Service Center, 3301 County Road 138, Waite Park. Tours will be available for Quarry Park.

Commissioner Engrav will chair as Chair Anderson will be out.

Meeting concluded at 12:20.

Chair Anderson

Date