



Engaging Your Local Officials & Legislators The Key To Legislative Success

Think of your park department as a creature created by and largely funded by the legislature. Even if 100% of your budget originates with fees or local tax levy, the authorization for those fees and levy is based in Minnesota Statute. The Legislature can also restrict your ability to develop parks or trails. To achieve success at the Legislature, the most important thing to do is to develop a working relationship with your legislator.

Engage Your Local Officials First

Before contacting legislators and legislative candidates, learn who within your oversight unit of government is primarily responsible for legislative contact. It could be an administrator, an elected official, or a hired lobbyist. You don't want to put yourself in a position of stepping on toes. More importantly, they can be your biggest allies in working with the legislature.

Spend some time making certain the person(s) responsible for legislative contacts knows the story of your parks and trails and is stressing that story when talking to legislators. Also make them aware of the GMPT and our work. Ask them if they'd like to receive our newsletter and updates.

Candidates Want to Talk to Voters and Learn About Local Issues

It is election season! Take advantage of that election season by learning who is running for the legislature in all or part of the area served by your park department. At a minimum, you will have one senate seat and one house seat, meaning at least four candidates running. If your department crosses a legislative boundary, those candidate numbers may double or triple.

Contact every candidate who is running in your area, this is not hard, they are at parades, meetings, and door knocking. Invite the candidates, all of them individually, to visit your office, offer to meet in a park, or offer to go for a walk on one of your trails. Candidates are busy, but there is not much campaigning a candidate can do between 8:00 and 10:00 AM.

Use this meeting time to explain your park system, tell them of your plans, stress any needs that can be met with help from the legislator. Review with them the legislative activities of the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails (US). You can go to our website at greaterminnparcsandtrails.org & download a handout at the [Legislative Action Tips & Hints menu](#).

Based on your local situation, you may wish to inform the person responsible for legislative relations in your unit of government of your plans for these contacts and meetings.

The purpose of these meetings is to establish the basis for an ongoing relationship through which you can seek to influence those candidates who actual win an election. After the election, we will be asking you to make further contact with your legislators and will provide advice on the best strategy to do that.

Just remember, our legislative success on your behalf is based in large part on the good relationships you have with your legislators. Now is the time to lay the groundwork and building a positive image of the importance of parks and trails in the minds of current and future legislators.



Engaging Your Local Officials & Legislators Checklist for Action

- Reach out to leadership at your local government unit (if you are part of a government entity).
 - Make sure they know your organization priorities and what you're working on.
 - Ask them if they want to receive our newsletter or email. (send those names to greaterminparksandtrails@gmail.com)
- Contact House and Senate legislative candidates. Invite for a morning meeting.
 - Consider a walk on a new or planned park or trail.
 - Consider inviting staff or supporters
- Prepare agenda in advance for visit, but keep it fairly simple, esp. if it's a first visit.
 - Tell them about your organization and how it serves community
 - Highlight current initiatives and any challenges you face
 - Mention any recent grants or grant applications
 - Describe what goes into building or operating trails and parks
- Introduce them to our GMPT Organization
 - Mention our legislative goals, including:
 - Securing legacy funds for Greater Minnesota
 - Securing bonding money for the Local Trail Connections and Outdoor Recreational Grant Program
 - If comfortable, mention some of the challenges that we've faced at legislature, such as restrictions on funding. Explain how that could hamper your efforts.
- Follow-up with a thank –you note after the meeting
- If they win, congratulate after the election