



Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails Annual Membership Meeting

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2017

Initiative Foundation, 405 First St. SE, Little Falls, MN

Agenda

9:30 a.m. Registration & Networking

10:00 a.m. Welcome & Call to Order – Marcia Larson, GMPT Chair

Chair Marcia Larson called the meeting to order at 10:00 am

a. Introductions/Attendance – Brad Harrington, GMPT Secretary

At 10:05 am attendance and introductions were done by going around the room and letting everyone in attendance introduce themselves and where they work/are from. See attached sign in sheet for full attendance.

b. Approval of Minutes – Brad Harrington

Ted Suss motioned to approve the minutes from April 21, 2017. Rod Spidahl 2nd and the motioned carried unanimously.

c. Treasurer's Report – Tom Salkowski, GMPT Treasurer

Tom Salkowski presented the Treasurer's Report. Current expenses total \$20,334.57 and current balance of \$33,542.86.

10:15 a.m. Organization Update/Overview of past year's activities – Marcia Larson

a. Membership Growth/Committee update

Marcia Larson opened up the discussion with pointing out that GMPT membership continues to grow. From 2014-2017 we have had a 34% increase in our members. In 2017 we had our first business member (WSB Consulting) and our first Tribal Organization (White Earth) join GMPT. Laird Mork pointed out that keeping our membership strong is what allows to really advocate for Parks and Trails. He also mentioned that he was able to secure additional funding from his organization (Chisago County) on top of the membership dues. This extra amount is what assist in providing the additional funds for GMPT to utilize Flaherty & Hood to help advocate for Parks and Trails. Barry Wendorf asked Laird how he was able to get his board to agree to pay additional funds above and beyond the membership dues? Laird responded with that he was able to show the return on investment through funding being available for projects. Marcia introduced the fee structure for membership that the board approved recently showing the different fees for jurisdictional size, business members, and individual members. Bryan Pike mentioned that he liked how the new structure was set up and believes that at a lower fee we could see more Townships look to join GMPT. Marcia Larson introduced the WSB representative, Jason Amberg. Laird Mork asked if he had seen any increase in projects and project success with the increase of Legacy funds in Greater Minnesota. Jason responded that they have seen an increase and that for the most part of have been successful in their projects in regards to Legacy funds. Marcia Larson recognized and thanked the Membership Committee for all of its hard work. Ted Suss let everyone know that the board would like to see more non-board members join the Membership Committee. Brad Harrington informed everyone of a sign-up sheet for anyone interested in joining the Membership Committee and that he was going to pass it around and please make sure that it got back to

him.

b. Communications update

Brad Harrington provided an update on Communications for GMPT. This past year we have introduced two social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter. Both are slowly growing, but they are growing. In the future we hope to utilize Facebook as a place for members to idea share, communicate and inform each other and the public on what is going on in Greater Minnesota. He mentioned that we are always looking for content for the Facebook page as well as the newsletter that we send out. If anyone has a projects, program, or something that they feel should be shared with the membership to contact him. Brad gave out his email address, bradley.harrington@co.wright.mn.us. Brad also mentioned that the board just approved for us to move forward with a digital newsletter that we will develop through Mail Chimp. This format will allow us to create the newsletter as the body of the email instead of an attachment. We will also not be limited by size of emails with this format. In addition with our social media roll out his will allow us to directly link items to our social media platforms. The Twitter account was created as a means to communicate with Legislators in and out of session. They have to monitor their Twitter accounts pretty regularly during session over the past few years. Brad also mentioned that if you would have any interest in joining the Communications Committee to please put your name on the sign up that is being passed around. We are also looking for people that would be willing to compose articles for the newsletter in the future as well.

c. Legislative/Administrative successes

Bradley Peterson with Flaherty & Hood talked about the success that we had at the Legislature this year. First we were able to fight off any bad legislation, particularly in regards to eminent domain and land acquisition restrictions in regards to purchase price. Unfortunately this will be something that we deal with every year as it is just the nature of the Legislative make up at this time. The other two major successes were securing the funding for the Greater Minnesota Recreation, Parks & Trails Commission and the proposed projects for funding through Legacy Funds and securing \$500,000 in the Local Trails Connection and Outdoor Recreation Grant programs in the general bonding bill.

Another item of interest that Bradley Peterson brought up was that the DNR did submit an application to the LCCMR for \$5 million for Local Trail Connections, Outdoor Recreation and Natural and Scenic Area Grant Programs. They submission did make it through but was cut \$2 million. Part of the reason it was cut was that the LCCMR felt that it should not fund ballfields and things of that nature. Mike Nigbur stated that we wanted to push for this as it provides funding sources for projects in Greater Minnesota that are not regionally designated. It was mentioned that it might be a good idea to have someone from GMPT to sit with the DNR during the presentations that next time. Ted Suss reminded everyone that this is a big deal because this is funding that DNR will give away and not put into their own projects and that the next battle will be keeping the LCCMR funding there in the future. Laird Mork asked Ted Suss what impact he thought GMPT had on getting the DNR to apply for LCCMR funds. Ted replied that GMPT was the main reason for them applying. Rod Spidahl stated that it is good to have lobbyist there as the DNR has shown that it isn't always willing to work with smaller communities and entities.

10:45 a.m. Policy/Legislative Discussion

a. Adopt legislative policies/agenda

Bradley Peterson with Flaherty & Hood led this discussion. He reminded everyone that the policies are the guidepost for us. It is the platform that describes our stance we take on issues and the agenda lays out the priorities for the year that we will actively pursue. The agenda items need to be adopted yearly and the policies only need to be voted on if there is a change.

Ted Suss motioned to approve the Legislative policies as amended. Motion was 2nd by Rod Spidahl and carried unanimously. Mike Nigbur motioned to approve the Legislative Agenda for 2018. Motion was 2nd by Laird Mork and carried unanimously.

b. 40/40/20 discussion (embedded within discussion of policy adoption)

Bradley Peterson started the discussion of the 40/40/20 split and the Legislative Policies and Agenda for GMPT in 2018 with reminding everyone that the policies are our guide post to help direct us. The agenda is what we will actively pursue at the Legislature.

One of the biggest topics is in regards to the 40/40/20 split of the Legacy funds. This past year we have seen some of our Legislators begin to comment and push for a greater percentage of the funds to go to Greater Minnesota. Do we want to strike while the iron is hot and fight this fight to increase Greater Minnesota's portion of the Legacy funds or do we hold still at the current split. Bradley mentioned that if we hold neutral we could lose the support of the Legislators in the future. Looking at data received from the survey that was sent out most of us would like to see a change in how the money is divided, but it is unclear where and how. Some of the suggestions that have come out are: 1) to equally divide the Legacy Funds, 2) keep the current split in tack but set a ceiling and after that ceiling the funds would be divided equally, and 3) to get the Commissions operational expenses pulled out of the Legacy funding and into a more secure place or at a minimum to get their operation cost pulled before the split happens.

Marcia Larson and Laird Mork provided a historical perspective on the current split. Both mentioning that current split was viewed as a victory for Greater Minnesota. Laird Mork reminded everyone that in 2011 a law was passed to the fighting over the Legacy funds. The DNR Commissioner had to convene a group with representation from all areas to come up with a solution, so a fight should be expected again as the last time it was only concluded due to the Governor stepping in and creating what he did.

Renee Mattson, Barry Wendorf and Tom Ryan all three provided the view of the Commission on the current split. At this time, the Commission hasn't taken a formal stance on whether to increase the split or not. Renee mentioned that they are a little cautious on discussing change because the legislative pendulum always swings. The other big concern is more with the Met Council. Tom Ryan stated that we need to be mindful that we are still new to the table. If we start to push on the people that have been there longer it could come back to haunt you. He did mention that of course we all would like to see more funding, but is it the right time to do it with still being so new. Tom and Barry Wendorf both stated that there were some good ideas brought out in the last Commission meeting (it was stated earlier in this section of the minutes). It seems that one of the more favorable options is to keep the percentage the same but create a ceiling and anything after that ceiling would be split evenly. That way no one is going to lose money. The other one is to get funding for the Commission's operations moved out of the Legacy funds. Barry did say that this is on the agenda for the Commissions next meeting and will hopefully get a direction from it. Jason from WSB was curious if there was a different angle to maybe look at, such as unifying the three entities and Rod Spidahl was wondering if we should look at LCCMR funding for the commission. Bradley Peterson did mention that we should look at other options to grow our end of the funding similar to the Met Council. Ted Suss stated that the current Legislature will only pull from one source to increase another, they won't just look to increase funding. He feels that the if the Legislature introduces it we should back it.

11:45 a.m. Elections/Break

Election of Ted Suss as Chair, Mike Nigbur as Vice Chair, Ben Anderson as the District 4 representative, Karlin Ziegler as the District 6 representative and leaving District 2 open at this time was passed with a motion to approve by Barry Wendorf, Steve Plaza provided a second and the motion passed unanimously.

12:00 p.m. Lunch – Selected Park Highlights

Rod Spidahl gave a presentation of the Glacial Trail project in Fergus Falls.

12:30 p.m. Presentation: Tackling Invasive Species

- Megan Weber, Extension Educator, Minnesota Aquatic Species

Research Center

- Monika Chandler, Noxious and Invasive Weeds and Biological Control

Program Lead, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

1:30 p.m. Update from the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails Commission –

Renee Mattson, Executive Director

Renee stated that the Commission received \$14 million in request and that there is only a little more than \$8 million in funding. People are starting to understand the process a little better as well. They are meeting next week (10/25/17) to sort through the funding applications. She reminded everyone that there is no deadline for designation applications and that there are currently four being reviewed. The next funding cycle will open next spring and that they are getting ready to launch phase two of the data management system.

2:00 p.m. “Hot Topics” Membership Discussion

This agenda item was removed by Chair Marcia Larson due to time restraints.

2:30 p.m. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 2:10pm.