

## **GMPT Legislative Update Forum AI Summary – January 10, 2025**

### **Quick recap**

GMPT Lobbyist Elizabeth Wefel hosted the forum. She started with an overview of the role of the organization in legislative advocacy, the importance of building relationships with legislators, and the ongoing political situation in Minnesota. She also discussed the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails' legislative policies and agenda, the upcoming legislative session, and the potential lack of quorum in the House.

### **Next steps**

- All members should get to know their legislators by introducing themselves and building relationships.
- Members are encouraged to sign up for legislative action day.
- All members are encouraged to read monthly newsletters and legislative updates from GMPT.
- All members should share stories of successful parks/trails projects funded through legacy grants with our lobbyist, Elizabeth Wefel and with their legislators.
- All members invited to attend the next legislative forum in a month.
- Renee Mattson, Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission has been delivering reports and other information to legislators.
- GMPT to finalize and share bill numbers, handouts, and more information when they are available.

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### **Summary**

#### **Legislative Advocacy and Team Effort**

Elizabeth discussed the role of the GMPT organization in legislative advocacy, emphasizing that it is a team effort involving members, the board, and the executive team. She highlighted the importance of strong relationships with legislators for success and encouraged members to voice their opinions to their own legislators and key ones. Elizabeth also mentioned the organization's legislative agenda, which is adapted in

October, and the need for consultation with the board and executive team on arising issues. She concluded by mentioning the upcoming legislative action day on February 25 where more information on lobbying would be provided.

### **Building Relationships with Legislators**

Elizabeth emphasized the importance of building relationships with legislators, suggesting that it's easier to call them up in an emergency if they already know who you are. Elizabeth provided several ways to build these relationships, including introducing oneself, meeting with them, attending town halls, inviting them to park board meetings, and recognizing their work publicly. She also warned about the upcoming chaos in the House of Representatives due to the reconstruction of the State Office Building, advising to call or email ahead of time to see representatives.

### **Minnesota Legislative Session Challenges**

Elizabeth discussed the upcoming legislative session in Minnesota, which began on January 14. She highlighted the challenges that might arise due to the Senate being tied at 33 DFL members and 33 GOP members until the winner of a January 28 special election is sworn in. She also mentioned the case of Senator Nicole Mitchell, who is facing criminal charges and whose trial is scheduled for January 27, just a day before the special election. Elizabeth noted that the trial's postponement to May could affect the dynamics in the Legislature.

### **Minnesota Political Power Struggle**

Elizabeth discussed the ongoing political situation in Minnesota, particularly the power-sharing agreement between the GOP and the DFL in the House of Representatives. She explained that due to a tied vote in the November election, the parties had agreed to share power, but this was challenged by Curtis Johnson, who was elected to the House 40B seat but did not live in the district. A judge ruled that he could not assume his seat, leading to a special election on January 28th. The GOP has sued to postpone this election, and the outcome is uncertain. Elizabeth also mentioned a second court challenge involving Brad Tabke, a legislator whose election was affected by 20 accidentally discarded ballots. The situation is complex, with both parties arguing for their respective positions, and the outcome of the power-sharing agreement and the elections remains uncertain.

## **Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails' Agenda**

Elizabeth discussed the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails' (GMPT) legislative policies and agenda. She explained that these policies guide their work at the Capitol, focusing on ensuring fair funding for regional and local parks and trails, supporting the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks Commission, and preventing undue burdens on park and trail construction. Elizabeth also outlined the GMPT's legislative agenda, which includes supporting legislation to tie reimbursement of state-granted administration fees to the work performed by the State Agency, allowing unspent grant money to continue forward, and using the general fund to pay for the operating costs of the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission. She mentioned that they would also support the passage of the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) bill and the inclusion of local parks and trails grants in the final bonding bill. Elizabeth emphasized that these were ambitious goals and that they would need to work hard to achieve them, especially considering potential budget deficits.

## **Upcoming Legislative Session and Action**

Elizabeth discussed the upcoming legislative session, mentioning that bill numbers would be assigned once the work starts. She encouraged the attendees to familiarize themselves with their legislators, sign up for the legislative action day, and reach out to their legislators for appointments. Elizabeth also emphasized the importance of reading the monthly newsletters and legislative updates and urged the attendees to share any controversies or stories they hear with the team. She concluded by inviting the attendees to join the legislative action day and another similar event in a month's time.

## **Senate Committee Structure Uncertainty**

Elizabeth discussed the ongoing uncertainty regarding the committee structure in the Senate and House, attributing the delay to power sharing and the replacement of the late Senator Kari Dziedzic. She expressed confidence that the committee list would be finalized by Monday and that committees might start scheduling hearings the following week. Elizabeth also addressed the potential lack of quorum in the House, stating that the situation was unclear and could potentially lead to legal challenges. She emphasized the need for both parties to work together to resolve the issue. The conversation ended with Joseph thanking Elizabeth and attendees for their participation.