



## CARVER COUNTY PARKS

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Division of Public Works

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### *Carver County Park Commission Regular Meeting*

Carver County Public Works Head Quarters  
11360 Hwy 212 West, Cologne, MN 55322

**Wednesday, March 11, 2009**

**7:00 P.M.**

#### **Agenda**

- 1) Call Regular Meeting to Order (7:00 p.m.)
- 2) Roll Call (7:00 p.m.)
- 3) Approval of the February 11, 2009 Regular Meeting Minutes (7:00 p.m.)
- 4) Additions or Deletions to the Agenda (7:05 p.m.)
- 5) Approval of Agenda (7:06 p.m.)
- 6) Commissioner Liaison Report (7:10 p.m.)
- 7) Open to the Public (7:15 p.m.)
- 8) Old Business (7:20 p.m.)
  - a. Comprehensive Plan
    - i. Equestrian Trails
  - b. 2009-2010 Goals and Strategies
- 9) Staff Reports (8:30 p.m.)
  - a. Lake Waconia Ballroom Draft Agreement (Marty)
  - b. 2009 Budget Update (Marty)
  - c. Application for Federal Recreation Trail Grant Program (Lenny)
  - d. Events, Activities, (Lenny)
  - e. Legislative - Parks Funding (Marty)
  - f. Regional Park Foundation Update (Marty)
- 10) Commission Member Reports (8:50 p.m.)
- 11) Set Next Meeting Date (8:55 p.m.)
- 12) Adjourn Meeting (9:00 p.m.)

**Please note if a Commission Member cannot attend the meeting, please call the Park Office at 466 – 5250.**

# Approved Minutes

## March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Regular Meeting

- Members Present:** Thomas Hermann, Neil Wingert, Jeff Conkling, Myron Karki, Jerald Moja
- Staff Present:** Marty Walsh, Lenny Klevan Schmitz
- Public Present:** Rayma Smith, Mary Novakowski, Leigh Harrod, JP Meyer
- CALL TO ORDER -** Wingert called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
- MINUTES -** Moja motioned to approve the February minutes. Karki seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.
- AGENDA-** Karki motioned to approve the agenda. Moja seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.
- LIAISON REPORT-** N/A
- OPEN TO THE PUBLIC-**  
Leigh Harrod, Excelsior Minnesota asked to have the meeting minutes and directors report available to the public in advance of future meetings so they could be aware of what is taking place and read the information in advance.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Comprehensive Plan – Equestrian Trails  
Walsh went through his Directors Report  
Staff and Park Commission agree that equestrian use is a desired activity within Carver County and the Carver County Regional Parks, Open Space and Trail System. At the January 14, 2009 Chair Wingert noted his desire to establish a list of resources pertaining to horse trails and horse trail development based on the positive feedback and support from those in the horse community throughout Carver County and the surrounding area for future reference. It is recommended that a subcommittee of the Parks Commission with members of the public meet to develop criteria which would help to identify possible future areas for equestrian trails. This information could be used to help guide the selection of new parks and conservation corridors or amend an existing park and trail master plan. Future areas are to include but not be limited to the former Dakota Rail Line corridor.

Second, it is recommended that language approved at the January 14, 2009 meeting of the Park Commission pertaining to equestrian trails remain. It is not recommended that additional language from February 11, 2009 meeting be added to either the Dakota Rail Regional Trail master plan or be placed in the Comprehensive Plan.

- The existing Dakota Rail Regional Trail is 16 feet wide. It is not

- practical to accommodate a parallel trail system in this dimension.
- The language would be in conflict with an approved trail master plan. It is not known if a parallel equestrian trail physically and economically works within the former rail corridor. Back slopes and fill may extend onto private property as an example.
  - Work should be done to determine if a horse trail in close proximity to the Luce Line is sustainable.
  - The master plan for the Dakota Rail Regional Trail can be amended in the future to accommodate an equestrian trail should it be desired.
  - To include additional language which could be construed to guide the Dakota Rail Regional Trail for equestrian purposes circumvents the public process to approve a use and the design elements needed to support the use. The approval of a use is done at a master plan level.
  - More specific language that guides a park area or a conservation corridor in the types of use is inconsistent with the Draft Comprehensive Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan. No other park or conservation corridor is guided in this manner.

It is recommended that the Park Commission clarify the motion that was made at the February 11<sup>th</sup> 2009 meeting pertaining to equestrian use on the Dakota Rail Regional Trail.

### **Additional Information**

At the February 11, 2009 meeting information was presented by members of the public concerning the desire to further amend the comprehensive plan to include language which would provide consideration for a horse trail in the alignment of Dakota Rail Regional Trail. The following report is provided for the Park Commission's review and consideration.

The Dakota Rail Line was identified in the 2000 Carver County 2020 Comprehensive Plan as a possible trail corridor should the line become abandoned.

The Dakota Rail Line was purchased in 2001. The rail line went through an abandonment process which preserved the 44 mile stretch of line from Hutchinson Minnesota to Wayzata Minnesota in the Counties of McLeod, Carver and Hennepin. The Railroad authorities of these Counties along with the Minnesota Department of Transportation entered into agreements to preserve the corridor for future transportation.

Salvage operations to remove rails and ties was substantially completed during 2004 and 2005.

In 2001, the Metropolitan Council amends its Regional Recreation Open Space Policy Plan. Among the changes is the consideration of the Dakota Rail Line in Carver County for trail purposes.

Carver County applied for Federal Transportation Enhancement funding to convert a portion of the former Dakota Rail Line corridor into a bituminous trail August 19, 2005. Letters of support were received from the City of Mayer and Three Rivers Park District for the project.

Carver County is notified late 2005 early 2006 that it has been awarded Federal Transportation Funds to construct 6.5 miles of a trail in the former rail corridor.

January 2006, Carver County contracts with SRF Consulting Inc. to develop a master plan for the Dakota Rail Regional Trail. SRF Consulting and county staff conduct a public process to present the master plan project, obtain input and review comments and draft plan. A master plan is needed in order for the trail to be considered for inclusion into the Regional Park System and eligible for regional funding. Also a master plan will help to determine uses on the trail and initial design elements.

The Carver County Park Commission recommended approval of the Dakota Rail Regional Trail Master Plan October 11, 2006. The Carver County Board approved the master plan May 1, 2007. The Metropolitan Council approved the master plan August 8, 2007.

January 14, 2009 Park Commission recommends additional language to include horse trails in conservation corridors of the County Comp Plan/Parks Open Space and Trails System Plan. Equestrian trails were listed as a possible use in new park areas but not conservation corridors. The new language presented at the meeting corrected the oversight of not mentioning horse trails as a possible use in conservation corridors.

February 11, 2009 Park Commission is requested to add language to the 2030 County Comprehensive Plan/Parks and Open Space Systems Plan. The Park Commission accepted the following motion “ The County Park Commission will continue to consider equestrian trails in the Dakota Rail corridor”

**The following inconsistencies are noted with the public process for the Dakota Rail Regional Trail Master Plan and the recommendation of the Park Commission on February 11, 2009.**

The master plan for the Dakota Rail Regional Trail went through a public process of open houses, researched information, public comments both verbal and written, approval process of public meetings at the County Park Commission level, County Board and ultimately the Metropolitan Council. It is recognized that not all groups or all individuals were satisfied with the outcome of the master plan process. The plan did accommodate the most significant user groups of walkers and bikers. The plan is also consistent with the user groups of runners/joggers and inline skaters. The plan did make accommodations for snowmobiling. The plan did not accommodate horseback riding, ATV use, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing for a variety of reasons.

The Dakota Rail corridor is 100 feet wide in most areas of the corridor. Notable exceptions to the width are in Mayer and New Germany where the corridor widens to several hundred feet.

The Dakota Rail Regional Trail is a 16 foot wide strip of land within the 100 foot corridor. The 16 foot area consists of a 10 foot wide trail with 3 foot shoulders. The planned trail will generally utilize the rail bed for an alignment in the corridor taking advantage of infrastructure of grade, trestles, and drainage structures to minimize cost to construct the trail.

A parallel trail of any kind was not discussed during the public process. A parallel trail to accommodate another use does not fit in the same 16' area as planned for the bike/pedestrian trail. The master plan encourages the preservation of existing vegetation within the Dakota Rail corridor for the purpose of visual screening of properties, wildlife and shade purposes. Shading is both significant to bike/pedestrians for the relief from the sun but also to preserve snow conditions on the trail for snowmobiling. An additional parallel trail would remove vegetation from the corridor and reduce screening, wildlife habitat, and shade.

In order to incorporate a parallel trail into the Dakota Rail Regional Trail a master plan amendment would be necessary. The proposed use of the parallel trail would need to go through a public review and approval process to be eligible for regional funding considerations. See the attached email message from Jan Youngquist of the Metropolitan Council.

A parallel trail could be planned and constructed in another portion of the Dakota Rail corridor with authorization from the Carver County Regional Railroad Authority.

Walsh asked the commission if they read the rest of his report which outlined the inconsistencies of public testimony at the February 11, 2009 meeting. Members indicated that they had read the information and Walsh did not read through this portion of the report.

Documents presented at the meeting included:

- March 11, 2009 Director's Report
- Email from Jan Youngquist
- Memo from James Andrew from the Metropolitan Council

After Walsh completed going through the information and Directors Report and reiterated that it is recommended that the Park Commission clarify the motion that was made at the February 11<sup>th</sup> 2009 meeting pertaining to equestrian use on the Dakota Rail Regional Trail.

Wingert asked to hear from the park commission, especially those who made and voted for the motion as stated below from the February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009 park commission meeting:

"The Carver County Park Commission will continue to consider equestrian use on the Dakota Rail Trail". Wingert asked for a vote...the vote was split, so Wingert asked for a roll

call vote. Yes – (4) Tieden, Conkling, Karki, Hermann No – (3) Wingert, Moja, Von Bargaen.  
The motion passes 4-3.

Conkling stated that he was concerned that if the plan for the Dakota Trail is changed that a good portion of the Federal funding would be lost for the trail development, which was a concern for him because he does not want to see the funding lost.

Moja ask for confirmation that the public planning process for the Dakota Trail Master plan was conducted as outlined and discussed. Walsh noted that it was.

Karki noted that he could see a separate process and potential project to add, at another time, an unpaved/turf trail in the Dakota Trail Corridor which would be usable by Equestrians.

Hermann stated he feels like the development of the Dakota Trail is set based on the past planning which has taken place and the timeline for the development.

Some discussion about the February Motion continued among the park commission members, staff and those present from the public.

Herman asked if the wording in the motion can simply be changed or amended? Walsh stated it could.

Conkling asked for further clarification about the difference between the Carver County 2030 Comprehensive Plan and the Carver County Parks, Trails and Open Space Systems Plan.

Walsh explained that the Comprehensive Plan is largely made of up the basic principles and policies which were part of or derived from the Parks Systems Plan, but the Comprehensive Plan was not an in-depth.

The park commission discussed a couple of possible changes to the motion to provide clarity and direction as to where the motion or language should go in the plans or if it needs to be in the plans at all, since the language was added in January to the Comprehensive Plan to include equestrian use as a possible consideration in future greenway corridors.

After some discussion and a vote of 0-5 to not approve the various changed motions, Conkling motioned to table this and to have park commission members work with Staff to develop and indentify a motion to be considered at the April meeting. Karki Seconded the motion to table this item. Vote was approved 5-0.

### **2009-2010 Goals and Strategies**

Walsh handed out a spreadsheet outlining the goals and strategies for the department for 2009 - 2010. Walsh provided some background and status updates of those goals and strategies.

Walsh asked if the Park Commission had any other requests or suggestions. Conkling asked about incorporating a policy for motorized equipment on paved trails for accessibility purposes. Walsh stated staff could explore how this could be permitted in an instance where someone is in a motorized wheel chair or similar motorized piece of equipment.

### **STAFF REPORTS -**

#### **a. Ballroom Service Provider Update**

Walsh provided a handout of the power point presentation he made to the Carver County Board March 3<sup>rd</sup> about finalizing the agreement with Lancer. The Board gave staff

permission to complete the agreement and the Board Chair will sign it once it has been reviewed.

**b. 2009 Budget Update**

Walsh stated that he has been directed to identify some proposed budget cuts for 2009. Administration has asked for cuts to be sustainable through at least 2010, if not longer. Walsh presented three potential cuts/service reductions for the thoughts and feels of the park commission.

1 – Elimination of Lifeguard services at Lake Minnewashta Regional Park and Lake Waconia Regional Park.

2 – Reduction to planning services for items such as master plans, Federal Trail Grants and the installation of septic connection for the camp hosts at Baylor.

3 – Operational Cuts – This would be the elimination or reduction to the following items:

- Reduce Seasonal Staff
- Reduce weed treatments at beach areas
- Postpone webpage upgrades
- Reduce Grounds Keeping Budget
- Reduce/eliminate Conference and training budget
- Reduce septic pumping
- Reduce Dust Control budget
- Eliminate portable restrooms/Biffs in the parks
- Eliminate environmental consulting for water monitoring at beaches, wildlife management, disease tree control (oak wilt).

Wingert stated he would like to see staff maintain budget items which could increase risk of injury (lifeguards) and health concerns (septic pumping, septic connection for camp hosts).

**c. Application for Federal Trail Grant**

Klevan Schmitz informed the park commission that the department applied for a Trail Grant for the development of the Dakota Trail in the amount of \$150,000 through the DNR.

**d. Events, Activities, Campground Software Demonstration**

Klevan Schmitz provided the park commission some information about other upcoming events and programs planned in the parks this spring and summer including the Maple Syrup open house on March 21<sup>st</sup> and Earth/Arbor Day event on Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup>. Lastly, Klevan Schmitz informed the park commission that they have advertised and are seeking new caretakers for Lake Minnewashta Regional Park.

**e. Legislative – Park Funding**

Walsh provided a brief history of the 3/8% sales tax funding and how the portion for parks and trails funding is proposed to be split up throughout the state and amongst the 10 Implementing agencies of the Metropolitan council.

**f. Regional Park Foundation**

Walsh handed out a power point presentation which was made by Peter Bell of the Metropolitan Council on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009 explaining the newly formed Regional Park Foundation.

**COMMISSION MEMBER REPORTS –**

Karki noted that the Waconia Chamber of Commerce will be having their semiannual Home and Business fair on April 18<sup>th</sup>. He encouraged the park staff and county to have a booth there with park information.

**NEXT MEETING** – April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 7 p.m. at the Carver County Public Works Facility in Cologne.

**ADJOURN** - Karki motioned and Conkling seconded to adjourn. Motion was approved 5-0 to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.