



# Meeting Minutes: Dakota County Planning Commission Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes-FINAL

Date: 8/24/2023

Minutes prepared by: Liz Hansen

Location: Western Service Center

## Attendance

### Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- Mike Cahn
- Barry Graham
- James Guttman
- Nate Reitz
- Tony Nelson
- Kelly Kausel
- Michael Esch
- Dennis Peine
- Brady Folkestad

### Dakota County staff members attending:

- Niki Geisler, Parks Director
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- Lil Leatham, Principal Planner
- Joe Walton, Natural Resource Senior Ecologist, Parks

### Member(s) Absent:

- Lori Hansen
- Jill Smith

## Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 7:00 p.m.
- By: Planning Commission Chair, Amy Hunting

## Pledge of Allegiance

- The Planning Commission opened the meeting by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

## Public Comments

- Comments/Notes: No audience member wished to address an item not on the agenda.

## Approval of Agenda

Chair Hunting asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

**MOTION: Commissioner Cahn moved, seconded by Commissioner Graham, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved**

## Approval of Minutes (from May 25, 2023)

Chair Hunting asked if there were any changes to the previous meeting's minutes.

The Planning Commission advised no changes, additions, or deletions.

**MOTION: Commissioner Graham moved, seconded by Commissioner Esch, approving the previous meeting's minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved**

## Welcome New Planning Commissioner—Brady Folkestad

Vice-Chair Guttman briefly introduced new Planning Commissioner Brady Folkestad, appointed from Commissioner Liz Workman's 5<sup>th</sup> district.

Commissioner Folkestad shared information about his work history and his family life. Commissioner Folkestad resides in Burnsville.

## Item VII. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-Range Plan and Natural Resource Management Plan – Action (Lil Leatham, Principal Planner; Joe Walton, Senior Ecologist)

Lil Leatham, Principal Planner, and Joe Walton, Senior Ecologist, presented this item. The Planning Commission received an overview of what's new and updated, the next steps in the process, responded to questions, and engaged in discussion.

Questions and comments by the Commissioners, along with responses from staff (*italics*):

What is Dakota County's Buckthorn removal plan? *Staff responded that different techniques are used to remove buckthorn, such as spraying techniques and hand pulling.*

A Commissioner stated that there was an excellent diagram with a detailed description of the garlic mustard strategy within the plan. *Staff thanked the commissioner for the comment.*

A Commissioner asked if garlic mustard could be used for anything else. *Staff responded that it could be eaten and harvested and that it had been brought in from Europe.*

What is a reach? *Staff responded that this is a linear water feature that flows into Trout Brook and is measured in feet or miles.*

Do the powerlines present an issue or problem from a Natural Resource Management perspective? *Staff responded that they would look into working with the power utility company for good management of vegetation under the powerlines.*

The amount of money for natural resource restoration and management is large. Are the maintenance costs significantly less once the plan is implemented? *Staff responded that the maintenance costs are ten times lower than the restoration costs, and staff try to use fire as the primary maintenance tool because removing brush is very expensive because this area has steep slopes. The use of herbicide and goat grazing are other methods to manage buckthorn.*

Is natural resource restoration in this park worthwhile, given that the park is at the bottom of the watershed? Are you battling something you can't win? *Staff responded that it depends, but we must be realistic in our expectations. Staff believes the level of garlic mustard can be managed. Though this park's natural systems have been altered, it is one of the highest-quality natural areas in Dakota County.*

A comment was made that Lebanon Hills provides an example of how long it may take for restoration. *Staff responded that there was more work to be done at Lebanon Hills, but we have seen progress. The plan for Miesville is striking a good balance. If something isn't working, we can change our approach.*

Is there a way to work with high schools or middle schools to do field trips and find ways to engage our youth in education opportunities within the park? *Staff responded that this a great idea and builds a sense of ownership of the park and the land, and this is exactly what we need: champions in the area and people interested in the land. One of the challenges at Miesville is recruiting volunteers, though once people visit the park, they love it and often return.*

Are we partnering with school districts and groups like the National Honors Society to get kids interested in different things? *Staff responded that there are hands-on learning opportunities outside with the Natural Resources staff, and we are rebounding to pre-COVID-19 numbers. However, we would love to see higher numbers. The visitor service plan is due for an update, and the demand is high, and schools want to be involved and be part of it.*

How many visitors do we get at this park? *Staff responded that in the year 2022, 33,000 visitors were estimated. However, we don't know about the Cannon River breakdown as many people enter the park for the purpose of canoeing, kayaking, or tubing and don't spend time at the park itself. Miesville is our least visited park, and Lebanon Hills is our most visited park, with nearly a million visitors annually.*

Has 4H has been utilized at all? *Staff responded that 4H and church groups have been used for the hoop house and garlic mustard pulls.*

Are the deer management park hunts viable? *Staff responded that this park is like a mecca for deer because they descend on this park from all the surrounding farm fields in the winter, and huge numbers are counted. Deer hunts happen yearly, and they are somewhat successful in managing the deer population.*

A Commissioner expressed that they were impressed with the deer management section and were happy to see multiple ways to control them in the long-range plan. *Staff responded that yes, there were alternatives to hunting. One of those ways was to reduce the amount of edge, open forest, and cropland.*

Will the maintenance roads be available for the public to use? *Staff responded that people can walk on the maintenance road, which is relatively clear of brush and debris but will not be maintained as trails or signed.*

Are campsites in the long-range plan? *Staff responded that campsites are in the operational long-range plan, and the main challenge with campsites is the ongoing operations costs.*

A commissioner stated that Miesville was once considered for the Bison range. Did staff conclude that getting trucks and operational vehicles in and out of this park would be difficult? *Staff responded that access was difficult, so Miesville was not chosen for the bison range. Also, there are no wells or wetlands.*

Is there a reason we are referring to this plan as a long-range plan versus a master plan? *Staff responded that the term "Master" has a negative connotation. Referring to this plan as a long-range plan was an internal decision to follow what Met Council is doing. The Metropolitan Council Parks Policy Plan will be completed in 2024 and will replace "Master Plan" with "Long-range Plan".*

A Commissioner asked staff if they knew how the Met council refers to language in parking signs with the terminology "Handicapped" vs. "Disability" parking. *Staff responded that they were unsure and that they could look into this.*

How often does an outhouse need maintenance, and with limited water access in this park, how would handwashing with a picnic area work? *Staff responded that electricity is already in the park. Water will require drilling a well. The current restrooms do not meet current ADA guidelines and would be updated to comply. The existing restrooms are fairly large and hopefully will be able to include adult changing tables and running water.*

A Commissioner informed the Planning Commission that after January 2024, ADA accessibility has to be part of the plan when remodeling and building new construction of bathrooms. If there are pit toilets in Miesville, they would not be considered ADA-accessible after January. *Staff were encouraged to keep this in mind for future construction of bathrooms.*

How much does it cost to maintain the bathrooms? *Staff responded that they did not know, but our grounds staff are there regularly.*

According to the night sky map, a Commissioner stated that Miesville Ravine Park seemed to be the darkest spot in Dakota County and a good spot for star gazing. They asked what is the plan for lighting in this plan. *Staff responded that dark sky lighting was overlooked and could be added.*

A Commissioner stated that with telescopes, there was low-pressure sodium light or mustard light that could be blocked out with a single filter, and it was also noted that Flint Hills Resources had also changed their lighting.

A Commissioner thanked staff for their work and for sharing the long-range plan with the Planning Commission. When reviewing these plans, desires, and constraints focus their attention, and it is gratifying to see those changes come forward.

**MOTION: Commissioner Reitz moved to recommend that staff release the Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-Range Plan and the Miesville Ravine Natural Resources Management Plan for public review, seconded by Commissioner Graham. Voice Vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved**

## Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions

Comments/Notes: Niki Geisler, Parks Director, provided the Planning Commission with an update on the following County Board Actions:

- County Board reviewed Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Concept
- Accepted grant funding from the National Scenic Byways program for Spring Lake Park Reserve
- Adopted the Veterans Memorial Greenway Interpretive Plan
- Toured Maintenance Facilities at Lebanon Hills Regional Park
- 3 Million Regional Bonding Dollars

## Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

CR 46/CR 85 Proposed Round-a-bout Open House	August 28, 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. USW 662 Union Hall, Vermillion Township
Crisis and Recovery Center Ground Breaking	October 3, 5 p.m. (details available at future date)

## Topics for next meeting (Thursday, September 28, 2023)

Niki Geisler, Parks Director, let the Planning Commission know that there are two tentative items on the schedule for next month’s meeting:

- Vermillion River Greenway Natural Resource Management Plan
- County Solid Waste Management Plan
- Planning Commission Workplan

## Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:

A Commissioner discussed the 30 million dollar Lebanon Hills Maintenance project in which the Whole's Physical Development Committee approved the schematic design. *Staff responded that the new shop does include space and is a significant investment.*

A Commissioner asked if the Planning Commission could review the County's legislative priorities for 2024. *Staff responded that the County Board develops legislative priorities using a Legislative Advisory Workgroup. Staff will be able to provide an update to the Planning Commission on the County's legislative priorities when we get closer to the 2024 Legislative Session.*

## **Adjournment**

Chair Hunting asked for a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION: Commissioner Folkestad moved, seconded by Commissioner Esch, to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 p.m. Voice Vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.**

**Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, September 28, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County Western Service Center, Apple Valley**

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator