



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

Date: 8/22/2024

Minutes prepared by Liz Hansen

Location: Thompson County Park, Dakota Lodge

Attendance

Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- Kelly Kausel
- Dennis Peine
- Lori Hansen
- Jill Smith
- Barry Graham
- Mike Cahn
- Steve Shurts

Member(s) Absent:

- Brady Folkestad
- James Guttman
- Tony Nelson

Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- Niki Geisler, Parks Director
- Tony Wotzka, Greenways Manager
- Beth Landahl, Visitor Services Manager

Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 6:15 p.m.
- By Chair, Commissioner 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 Hansen moved, seconded by Commissioner Cahn, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 9 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved

Approval of Minutes (from May 23, 2024)

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 Smith, approving the previous meeting's minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 9 – Nays – 0 Abstain – 0 – Unanimously Approved

Welcome New Planning Commissioner – Stephen Shurts, District 6

Planning Commission Chair Amy Hunting introduced new member Stephen Shurts, representing District 6. Steve is originally from Wisconsin and is a Badger fan. His background is in nuclear and electrical engineering. He is currently retired and enjoys spending time with his grandkids. Steve looks forward to serving on the Planning Commission.

Park Capital Improvement Program Update – Information (Tony Wotzka - Parks)

The Planning Commission received an update on the projects that are currently included in the draft 2025-2029 CIP for the overall Dakota County Parks and Greenways system.

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

Is grant writing a separate department or is there a grant writing specialist at Dakota County? *Staff responded that there are a number of people who prepare grants from different departments. Multiple people are needed because grant writing requires subject expertise. The County also uses consultants for some grants depending on the time, effort, and expertise needed for each grant application.*

What is the status of the Lebanon Hills Sustainable Trails study? *Staff responded that Phase 1 of the project will begin in September. A brief update was provided, which included sharing that there will be public engagement during the design process.*

A Commissioner asked about funding levels for the Natural Resource Management Program in the future. There appears to be a reduction in the Capital Improvement Program. *Staff responded that the Natural Resource Management Program is adequately funded for 2025 and beyond. There will not be a reduction in staff or in the resources dedicated to these efforts. Staff shared that the draft CIP only shows one data point at this point in the budget process and that additional detail will be provided throughout the budgeting season to show the financial commitments to Natural Resources.*

Does Dakota County receive outside funds for natural resource restoration and management Projects? *Staff responded that the County receives significant funding for natural resource restoration and is anticipating that it may receive even more funding from the State LCCMR next year based on recent recommendations from the State LCCMR committee. The County Board has discussed the benefits of seeking and receiving external funding, but also that external funds are often less consistent and, therefore, less reliable than other funding sources. The County Board is likely to continue discussing options for reliable and consistent funding for the park system operations and maintenance.*

Property insurance is increasing because of Minnesota's hail storms and climate. Is that part of the operating budget? *Staff responded that Dakota County is self-insured, so it will not need to pay more for private insurance, but nonetheless may need to reserve additional funding to pay for the damages caused by more severe storm events. Staff will follow up with the Capital Facilities Department regarding whether storm damage costs have increased over time.*

How does Dakota County determine how much of the budget should be reserved for improvements to the park system vs. maintenance? Do park plans still show the need for new improvements? *Staff responded that current long-range park plans that have been recommended by the Planning Commission and approved by the County Board still show the options for future improvements. Operations and maintenance costs continue to grow with the growth of the system and staff try to anticipate these expenses along with the capital improvement plans.*

The CIP summary shows significant variability in the amounts set aside for natural resource projects from year to year. Why is that? *Staff responded that the current CIP does not show the funding that was approved and carried over from previous years, and that often funding from previous years is still programmed for future projects. When taking into account funding from previous years, as well as external dollars received, there is less variability in natural resource expenditures from year to year.*

A comment was made that the County Board previously stated that it wanted to accelerate the greenways. *Staff responded that the draft CIP has a number of greenway projects, ranging from design to construction phases. The board will discuss these projects moving forward when the CIP is reviewed and approved.*

Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions

Comments/Notes: Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, provided the Planning Commission with an update on the following County Board Actions:

- Discussed 2050 Vision for Parks and Natural Resources – Connected Places
- Reviewed proposed Capital Improvement Plan
- Approved contract for design services for Lebanon Hills sustainable trails improvements
- Approved design for Fischer Avenue Trailhead at Spring Lake Park Reserve

Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

County Hwy 50 and I-35 Interchange Open House	September 9, 2024 from 4:30pm-6:30pm Celebration Church (16655 Kenyon Ave, Lakeville, MN 55044)
2050 Park Vision Plan Online input	Comments period now through September 22 https://zanassoc.mysocialpinpoint.com/dakota-county-2050-vision-plan
CSAH 73 (Babcock Trail) and Upper 55 th trail design Open House	October 1, from 4:30pm-6:30pm Veterans Memorial Community Center, Inver Grove Heights

Topics for next meeting (Thursday, September 26, 2024)

Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, provided an overview of next month’s meeting topics:

- Solid Waste Management Plan – consider recommending adoption
- 2050 Park Vision Framework – vision and goals

Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:

No updates or announcements were given.

Tour

The Planning Commission went on a walking tour of Thompson County Park. Staff provided an overview of recent improvements, including the Thompson Lake water quality project, ADA loop trail, play area improvements, and programming changes. The Planning Commission discussed how the improvements at Thompson have been received by the changing community. Planning Commission members also discussed the possibility of combining Thompson County Park with Kaposia and Kaposia Landing as a potential new regional park as suggested in the County’s Park System Plan adopted in 2008. The tour concluded with the adjournment of the Planning Commission meeting.

Adjournment

Chair Hunting asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Commissioner Rich moved, seconded by Commissioner Shurts, to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Voice Vote: Ayes – 8 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.

**Next Meeting: Thursday, September 26, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County
Western Service Center, Apple Valley**

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator