



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

Date: 3/27/2025

Minutes prepared by Liz Hansen

Location: Western Service Center

## Attendance

### Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- James Guttman
- Tony Nelson
- Dennis Peine
- Jill Smith
- Lori Hansen
- Paul Nasvik
- Barry Graham
- Ibrahim Abdinasir
- John Wallace

### Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- Niki Geisler, Parks Director
- Lil Leatham, Principal Planner
- Georg Fischer, Physical Development Director
- Bruce Chamberlain, Lead Consultant, Tlal-li

### Member(s) Absent:

- Kelly Kausel
- Steve Shurts

## Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 7:00 p.m.
- By Chair, Jim Guttman

## 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 Guttman asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

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

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

## Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (from January 23, 2025)

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

The Planning Commission discussed the changes noted below.

- Pg. 1—Members Present: Lori Hansen should only be listed once. The list should contain 13 members.
- Pgs. 3, 4, & 7—Approval of the Agenda, Establishment of 2025 Meeting Dates, and Adjournment: Each vote should reflect 13 ayes, not 14.
- Pg. 3—Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (from December 19, 2024): The vote recorded should reflect 12 ayes and one abstain.

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

## Release Draft 2050 Vision for Park, Greenway, and Natural Systems - Action (Lil Leatham – Planning, Niki Geisler - Parks)

The Planning Commission received an update on the 2050 Vision for Parks, Greenways, and Natural Systems. Lil Leatham, project manager; Niki Geisler, Parks Director; and Bruce Chamberlain, Lead Consultant, Tlal-li, presented this topic and responded to questions.

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

A Commissioner complimented staff on the preparation of the plan and expressed urgency to protect lands and secure funding for land restoration. There was a discussion about whether the recent cuts to federal programs and grants will impact the implementation of the County's plan. A concern was raised about having stable and reliable funding sources. Planning Commissioners also discussed how some cities and counties have developed additional funding sources, such as by creating a park district with taxation authority. *Staff responded that the loss of near-term federal funding will impact near-term implementation but that the plan is a long-range vision*

*and that there will likely be surplus and deficit cycles over the life of the plan. Staff also pointed out that the funding sources used to protect and restore lands come from a combination of federal, state, metro, county, municipal, and private sources and that the majority of funds are not from federal programs. Dakota County may wish to explore the benefits of creating a separate park district as an additional revenue source.*

Planning Commissioners emphasized the importance of having a strong vision and strategies to implement the vision. Commissioners requested that staff periodically update the Planning Commission about the County's five-year capital improvement program and its alignment with the goals and strategies in the plan. A Commissioner noted that the five-year capital improvement program is able to be adjusted by the County Board based on the fiscal circumstances at that time. *Staff agreed to this request.*

A Commissioner requested that an executive summary be prepared for the plan. *Staff responded that an executive summary is being prepared and is nearly complete.*

A question was raised about how the plan responds to the growth projected to occur in Dakota County over the next 20 years. *Staff responded that the region's growth forecasts were used to develop the plan. Many of the County's future greenways are located in rural areas that will transition to urban areas. Staff met with cities over the last several months and discussed areas that are being planned for growth. City staff were supportive of the County's plans for new greenways and parks to meet the needs of the growing population.*

A comment was made that the goals and strategies in the plan could do a better job of emphasizing the need to collaborate with cities. *Staff responded that Goals 8 and 11 are intended to address the need for collaboration but staff will look more closely at the language to see if it can be strengthened.*

A comment was made that Inver Grove Heights is experiencing significant growth. Do the cities understand that it is the County's role to provide regional parks and not city parks? *Staff responded that in their meetings with cities, they clarified that the County's role is to meet regional park needs.*

The Planning Commission discussed the purpose of the plan and the County's role to provide regional parks. A comment was made that the city of Lakeville appreciates the County's expertise in natural management. Commissioners discussed that the plan is a long-term vision and that adjustments will be needed during implementation according to funding opportunities and circumstances.

The Planning Commission discussed the use of the term "underrepresented," used throughout the plan to describe which demographic groups are visiting or not visiting the County Park system. Some Commissioners requested that a different term be considered and that "underrepresented" is thought by some to be a biased term. Perhaps a definition is needed within the plan to communicate the results of the demographic analysis more clearly. *Staff responded that the National Park and Recreation Association uses this term and that it is an industry-standard. Staff will explore whether there are alternate terms that can be used to describe the under/over-representation of demographic groups at County parks and greenways and that a definition can be added to the plan for clarity.*

The Planning Commission held a discussion about how well the County Park System is meeting the needs of all County residents and whether all demographic groups were engaged in this process. A comment was made that it is important for the County to make sure that all of its residents are accommodated somewhere in the park System. *Staff responded that there have been many outreach events to engage demographic groups that have not traditionally used large natural area regional parks. Staff provided an overview of some of the specific groups and events where outreach occurred over the last six months.*

Planning Commissioners discussed recreational trends and how they are changing. A comment was made that many retirees are interested in rock climbing and mountain biking. We have an opportunity to meet these desires using the County's natural resource based park system and to be a leader in the region.

It was noted that the gray font used for the plain text was difficult to read. Several other technical comments and suggested corrections were made. *Staff responded that the font can be changed to make the document more readable, and the corrections will be made.*

The Planning Commission inquired about the next steps in the process. *Staff provided an overview of the upcoming County Board approval steps and the public engagement process. Staff also mentioned that they are developing a staffing plan to address some of the challenges associated with using seasonal employees to do year-round regularly occurring tasks.*

**MOTION: Commissioner Rich moved, seconded by Commissioner Graham, recommending the Physical Development Committee of the Whole release the 2050 Vision Plan for Dakota County Park, Greenway, and Natural Systems document for public review. Voice vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 Abstain – 0 – 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:

- Reviewed the Lebanon Hills Regional Park Sustainable Trails Plan
- Authorized joint powers agreements with multiple cities for greenway construction
- Authorized contract to prepare Mississippi River Greenway Long-Range Plan

## Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

CSAH 26 reconstruction Open House	Tuesday, April 1, 4:30pm-6:30pm Veterans Memorial Community Center (Room 1) Inver Grove Heights
Draft Mississippi River Greenway Natural Resources Management Plan Open House	TBD – June/July  (pending release for public review)

## Topics for next meeting (Thursday, April 24, 2025)

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

- Mississippi River Greenway Natural Resource Management Plan

## Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:

A Commissioner announced a vacancy on the Met Council following a recent resignation.

A Commissioner asked if Dakota County is submitting a letter of intent with 3M regarding the PFAS settlement. *Staff responded that, yes, Dakota County intends to submit a letter of intent for up to \$5 million in Spring Lake Reserve Park funding for restoration and recreation projects.*

What are our expectations regarding bonding? *Staff responded that there are four bonding requests: Thompson County Park, a natural resources request, the new recycling zone, and I35/50.*

A Commissioner announced that Trout Unlimited received an award for a Miesville Ravine restoration plan.

The Planning Commission Chair announced that the Dakota County Board of Adjustment met earlier in the evening.

A Commissioner acknowledged staff members Lil Leatham and Kurt Chatfield for their milestone years of service, which they were recognized for at the Board meeting on February 18.

## Adjournment

Chair Guttmann asked for a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION: Commissioner Smith moved, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m. Voice Vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.**

**Next Meeting: Thursday, April 24, 2025, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County Western Service Center, Apple Valley**

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator