



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

Date: 1/22/2026

Minutes prepared by Liz Hansen

Location: Western Service Center

Attendance

Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- James Guttman
- Tony Nelson
- Dennis Peine
- Jill Smith
- Paul Nasvik
- Barry Graham
- Ibrahim Abdinasir
- Steve Shurts
- Andrea Vaubel

Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- John Mertens, Principal Planner

Member(s) Absent:

- Kelly Kausel
- Lori Hansen

Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 7:00 p.m.
- By Planning Manager, Kurt Chatfield
- Commissioner Smith arrived at 7:02 p.m.
- Commissioner Nasvik arrived at 7:07 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Election of 2026 Planning Commission Officers

Election of 2026 Planning Commission Chair

Kurt Chatfield provided an overview of the Planning Commission's bylaws and procedures before the Planning Commission voted on its 2026 officers. He informed the Planning Commission that the 2025 officers were eligible for a second year in their positions, and that any Planning Commission member was eligible to be nominated for any of the officer positions.

Planning Manager, Kurt Chatfield, began the election of Planning Commission positions by calling for a nomination for the Planning Commission Chair.

Commissioner Shurts nominated Commissioner Guttman for the position of Planning Commission Chair. No additional nominations were made.

Vote: unanimously approved

Commissioner Guttman then assumed the duties of Chair for 2026.

Election of 2026 Planning Commission Vice-Chair

Chair Guttman called for nominations for the position of Planning Commission Vice-Chair.

Commissioner Vaubel nominated Commissioner Graham for the position of Vice Chair. No additional nominations were made.

Vote: unanimously approved

Commissioner Graham then assumed the duties of Vice Chair.

Election of 2026 Planning Commission Secretary

Chair Guttman called for nominations for the position of Planning Commission Secretary.

Commissioner Graham nominated Commissioner Rich. No additional nominations were given.

Vote: unanimously approved

Commissioner Rich then assumed the duties of Secretary.

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 Shurts, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (from November 20, 2025)

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

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

MOTION: Commissioner Nasvik moved, seconded by Commissioner Rich, approving the previous meeting’s minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 Abstain – 0 – Approved

Introduction of New Planning Commissioner (by Commissioner Graham)

Vice Chair, Commissioner Graham, introduced one new member to the Planning Commission during the meeting. Andrea Vaubel has been appointed by Commissioner Workman to represent District 5.

Commissioner Vaubel is from Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, she currently resides in Burnsville with her family. She is the Deputy Commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. She feels strongly about public service and stated that she is excited to join the Planning Commission.

Planning Commission Administrative Forms – Information

Administrative Coordinator, Liz Hansen, spoke about two forms that must be filled out and returned. The two forms are: “Consent to Release Private Data” and “Citizen Advisory Committee Member Statement of Representation.” Every year, Planning Commissioners must fill out the two mandatory forms.

Establishment of 2026 Meeting Dates – Action

Kurt Chatfield proposed meeting dates for 2026.

Chair Guttman entertained a motion to approve the 2026 meeting dates as presented. The Planning Commission voted to approve the 2026 meeting dates.

Commissioners discussed the need to hold individual member calendars open for the months that the Planning Commission is not scheduled to meet, in case one of those dates is needed for a meeting. Those possibilities may include: if quorum is not met the month before, if a project tour is scheduled, or if a meeting is needed for any other reason.

MOTION: Commissioner Shurts moved, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, approving the 2026 Meeting Dates. Voice vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 Abstain – 0 – Approved

2026 Planning Commission Work Plan – Information

Planning Manager Kurt Chatfield outlined the County Board’s adopted 2026 Planning Commission Workplan.

A Planning Commissioner suggested several topics to be added to the workplan for staff’s consideration:

1. Receive an update on the Vermillion Greenway alignment and design.
2. Receive an update on Master Plan update schedule for Whitetail Woods and Lebanon Hills. *Staff responded that everything has been bumped back a year in response to changes to the Parks budget.*
3. Receive, update and review the sustainable trail study for the western and middle sections of Lebanon Hills.

Staff agreed to provide updates on the above projects and solicit Planning Commission comments. Following the staff update, the Planning Commission may decide to whether the update was sufficient, or whether the Planning Commission would like to amend their annual Work Plan.

Mississippi River Greenway Long-Range Plan – Information (John Mertens, Planning)

John Mertens, Principal Planner, presented this topic and responded to questions. John provided an overview of the public engagement that has been conducted to date, and described the topics that are proposed for the draft plan, scheduled to be presented to Planning Commission this Spring.

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

Some sections of the trail seem to have more visitors. How should the plan address the busier sections, with a dual trail? *Staff responded that yes, some areas are busier than others and may need a different design. Also, busier sections of the trail and areas near trailheads may need more amenities such as benches for resting.*

Electric bikes may cause safety concerns. Will electric bike regulations be posted and enforced? *Staff responded that the electric bikes are a topic of discussion locally and nationally, and that the County will closely monitor safety issues and best practices to maintain safety. Among other strategies, the County may use its trail ambassador program to engage riders along the trail. In some instances, alternate routes can be shown on maps that may be desirable for faster riders.*

Will the Mississippi River greenway trail extend beyond Dakota County for bicycle touring? *Staff responded that there is a Mississippi River Trail (MRT) plan up to Itasca and extending south of Dakota County. Much of the state-wide route is on shoulders and low-volume roads.*

Has Dakota County coordinated with Goodhue County on the trail to Redwing? *Staff reported that meetings have been held with Goodhue County staff and there are opportunities for the trail to extend south to Red Wing.*

Will there be opportunities to camp along the greenway trail, especially between Hastings and Red Wing? *Staff responded that there are not opportunities to camp at this time, but this would be a good topic of discussion with the MN Department of Natural Resources.*

A comment was made that the plan should identify the Railroad corridor as a potential alignment, if that opportunity becomes available. *Staff agreed with the comment.*

A Commissioner noted that the 27-mile greenway trail length is the perfect marathon distance. Should the Plan propose hosting a marathon? *Staff responded that the County's greenway system hasn't hosted marathons in the past but certainly would be able to. Staff agreed with the comment.*

A comment was made that there has been good public engagement to date and that a large number of people are leaving comments on the plan. The place based comments are particularly helpful.

A comment was made that the character of the Mississippi River greenway changes from that of a narrower urban setting in the north to a wider rural setting in the south. Perhaps Dakota County could have different standards for urban and rural settings. Urban greenways may need more amenities if they are not in nice natural settings. *Staff agreed with the comment.*

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:

- Authorized joint powers agreement with Rosemount for alignment study of the Vermillion Highlands Greenway
- Approved the Planning Commission's Work Plan for 2026
- Authorized appeal of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Nelson Mine project in the Mississippi River at Spring Lake Park Reserve

Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

- Natural System Plan – Revised Objectives
 - Pop-ups, various County Park events

Topics for next meeting (Thursday, March 26, 2026)

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

- Draft Parks Natural Systems Plan – Implementation Chapter

Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:

A Planning Commissioner announced a position opening on the Met Council due to a recent resignation.

A Planning Commissioner asked a question about the status of data centers in Dakota County. *Staff responded that they do not have any updates at this time but would share information with the Planning Commission if there are new proposals in Dakota County.*

A Planning Commissioner asked staff to give an update on the bison herd at the next meeting. *Staff agreed to return with an update.*

A question was asked about the County’s legislative priorities. *Staff committed to return with a list of legislative priorities (this list was subsequently provided to the Planning Commission in an email following the meeting).*

Commissioner Guttman gave a brief update on the Dakota County Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting that he attended as part of his responsibility as Planning Commission Chair.

Adjournment

Chair Guttman asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Commissioner Graham moved, seconded by Commissioner Smith, to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m. Voice Vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 26, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County Western Service Center, Apple Valley

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator