



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

Date: 3/26/2026

Minutes prepared by Liz Hansen

Location: Western Service Center

Attendance

Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- James Guttman
- Tony Nelson
- Barry Graham
- Steve Shurts
- Andrea Vaubel
- Kelly Kausel
- Lori Hansen
- Dennis Peine
- Jill Smith

Dakota County staff members attending:

- Mary Jackson, Sr. Planner
- Tom Lewanski, Natural Resources Manager
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator

Member(s) Absent:

- Paul Nasvik
- Abdinasir Ibrahim

Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 7:00 p.m.
- By Chair Guttman
- Commissioner Smith arrived at 7:10 p.m.

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

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (from January 22, 2026)

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

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

MOTION: Commissioner Vaubel moved, seconded by Commissioner Graham, approving the previous meeting’s minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 Abstain – 0 – Approved

Draft Parks Natural Systems Plan – Implementation Chapter

Mary Jackson, Sr. Planner, and Tom Lewanski, Natural Resources Manager, discussed progress and updates on the Natural Systems Plan, an operational plan that governs the management of natural systems in the county. The plan includes objectives like prioritizing ecologically important areas, enhancing water quality, and managing natural systems. The county has restored 47% of its parkland and aims to achieve full restoration by 2046. Challenges include funding for long-term management and the system’s growth. The plan also addresses climate change impacts, such as assisted migration and wildlife movement. The Planning Commissioners emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement and potential collaboration with agricultural partners to protect farmland and natural resources.

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

- How can we reach people that would like to volunteer but don’t have access to digital media? Could we use electronic signage for volunteer opportunities at Lebanon Hills? *Staff will contact Garrett Zaffke, Community Relations Volunteer Coordinator, and Visitor Services so they can evaluate signage and alternative signup methods.*
- Suggestion to draft and include a policy-level or strategy-level statement on noxious weed management for parks within the natural systems plan. *Staff will add language to the plan related to Parks and also to private easements.*

- Review and correct the alphabetical ordering/labeling (A, B, C, D, E) in the draft section to fix the duplicated letter and prevent confusion in future reviews. *Staff will correct.*
- The Planning Commission would like to receive more status updates on the implementation of the plans they have reviewed. The pie chart of management status is an example. They would like more follow-up and more opportunities to celebrate good work. *Staff will provide more updates.*
- Ensure that the draft plan prioritization criteria reflect climate change initiatives. *Staff agreed to add.*

Bison Update

Tom Lewanski provided an update on the bison at Spring Lake Park. Nine females are currently in paddocks two and three, with the best viewing location at the Fahey trailhead. Staff plan to move the bison in mid-April. A bull from Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge is expected to arrive in January after quarantine at the Minnesota Zoo. The fertile period for bison is June-July, with calves expected in spring 2028. Weekly checks are conducted on the bison to ensure their health and well-being.

Planning Manager Update and County Board Actions

Comments/Notes: Mary Jackson, Sr Planner, provided the Planning Commission with an update on the following County Board Actions:

The County Board approved a contract with Lakeville for a new recycling zone, set to open in 2027. Discussions are ongoing about potentially accepting additional materials beyond those currently accepted at the Recycling Zone in Egan.

The County Board will receive a presentation on data centers on April 7th.

A contract to prepare the Greenway systems plan was approved, with several Greenway design projects underway.

The County Board approved designs for a shelter to serve the campground at Lake Byllesby and an overlook on the west side of the park.

Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

Comprehensive Plan Update and Public Meetings

- Mary Jackson noted that the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update will include a greenhouse gas inventory and strategies for climate mitigation and adaptation.
- Upcoming public meetings include a noise wall discussion in Lakeville, an open house for CSAH 26 reconstruction, and an open house for the Mississippi River Greenway.

- The CSAH 42 modernization project will host an open house on April 16, and the groundbreaking for the new recycling zone is scheduled for April 22.

Topics for next meeting (Thursday, May 28, 2026)

Mary Jackson, Sr Planner, provided an overview of next month's meeting topics:

- Mississippi River Greenway Long Range Plan – Release draft plan for public review

It was noted that the agenda listed an incorrect date for the next meeting, which was verbally corrected to Thursday, May 28, 2026.

Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:

- Planning commissioner updates included a discussion on a Nelson mine project, which was canceled due to negative feedback.
- No further announcements or updates were provided by the planning commissioners.

Adjournment

Chair Guttman asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Commissioner Shurts moved, seconded by Commissioner Hansen, to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. Voice Vote: Ayes – 11 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.

**Next Meeting: Thursday, May 28, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County
Western Service Center, Apple Valley**

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator