



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

Date: 5/25/2023

Minutes prepared by: Liz Hansen

Location: Camp Spring Lake Retreat Center

## Attendance

### Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- Mike Cahn
- Barry Graham
- James Guttman
- Nate Reitz
- Tony Nelson
- Jill Smith
- Kelly Kausel
- Michael Esch

### Member(s) Absent:

- Dennis Peine
- Lori Hansen

### Dakota County staff members attending:

- Georg Fischer, Physical Development Division Director
- Niki Geisler, Parks Director
- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- Joe Walton, Natural Resource Senior Ecologist, Parks
- Sarah Evenson, HKGi

## Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 6:04 p.m.
- By: Planning Commission Chair, Amy Hunting

## Tour of Bison at Spring Lake Park Reserve (Joe Walton- Parks)

Dakota County's Natural Resource Senior Ecologist, Joe Walton, discussed the bison with the Planning Commission. The tour included observing the herd of bison and viewing their handling location. Staff responded to questions.

## Pledge of Allegiance

- Following the bison tour, the Planning Commission returned to Camp Spring Lake and began the formal part of their 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 Rich moved, seconded by Commissioner Smith, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved**

## Approval of Minutes (from March 23, 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 Reitz moved, seconded by Commissioner Graham, approving the previous meeting's minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved**

## Welcome New Planning Commissioner—Michael Esch

Vice-Chair Guttman briefly introduced new Planning Commissioner Michael Esch, appointed from Commissioner Liz Workman's district.

Commissioner Guttman shared information about Commissioner Esch's work history and civic engagement with the Burnsville Planning Commission. Commissioner Esch stated that he is looking forward to working with the Dakota County Planning Commission.

## Item VIII. Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Concept Plan – Review and Comment (Sarah Evenson, HKGi)

Sarah Evenson, from Hoisington Koegler Group Inc., Landscape Architect, presented this item and responded to questions. The Planning Commission received an overview of community feedback, revisions to the vision and guiding principles, 5-year, 10-year, long-term concepts, and implementation priorities.

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

The Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Concept Plan does not significantly focus on trout fishing; why is that? *Staff responded that the Natural Resource Management Plan that is being prepared for the park places a greater focus on trout fishing. The County is also working with Trout Unlimited on restoration projects. Staff agreed to add references in the Park Master Plan to recognize the importance of trout fishing.*

Planning Commissioners discussed the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and trail surface types. *Staff responded that ADA trails do not need to be paved to meet ADA standards and that compacted aggregate trails also are able to meet ADA standards. Compacted aggregate trails would likely be the surface at this location.*

A question was raised about the difference between “Embracing the Cannon River” and “Enhancing the connection to the Cannon River Valley” in the vision and guiding principles. *Staff responded that the park within the context of the larger Cannon River Valley doesn’t have to provide all recreational offerings but can be part of a larger recreational system.*

An audience member addressed the committee and mentioned that bicycle users may travel from Mendota to Miesville, and along the Cannon River. *Staff acknowledged that some bicyclists may make this trip and visit the park.*

There was a general discussion about the County Board’s direction to limit near-term investments at Miesville at this time to direct more funding toward parks that will receive more visitation, such as Lake Byllesby Regional Park and Spring Lake Park Reserve. *Staff summarized the County Board’s direction from the Physical Development Committee meeting and mentioned that there will be a presentation at the June 13, 2023, PDC meeting where the County will receive updated revenue forecasts and may provide further direction to staff relevant to expenditures at Miesville.*

A comment was made that since a portion of the park is within Goodhue County that Goodhue County should contribute financially toward park improvements. *Staff provided background on how it is not unprecedented for regional park implementation agencies like Dakota County to purchase land outside of their political jurisdiction using regional funding for the benefit of their residents. An argument could be made for collecting funds from Goodhue County but there is not necessarily a mechanism in place to do so.*

Planning Commissioners discussed the phase 1 trail improvement limits and made several specific suggestions about truncating trails and facilities (e.g. bathrooms) along the Cannon River to improve trail experiences for visitors. Commissioners suggested moving trail stubs to later phases for logical termination points. *Staff agreed to make the suggested changes.*

There was a general discussion and desire to extend soft surface trails to the upper prairies as part of the phase 1 improvements. *Staff described the challenges of providing a bluff top prairie trail system without providing*

*trailhead access and the corresponding expense. Staff noted the Planning Commission's interest but also the budget constraints for phase 1 improvements. If new or unanticipated funding were to become available, the County Board would have the option to accelerate projects planned for mid-term or long-term phases.*

A question was asked about whether there would be handicapped parking spots near the canoe/kayak/tube launch. *Staff responded that three handicapped parking spots are proposed.*

The Planning Commission asked about which recreational improvements that would result in increased visitation. *Staff responded that the expansion of the trail network would likely be the most significant improvements resulting in increased visitation.*

A comment was made that the work that Trout Unlimited is doing along the trout stream is creating a nice parallel access road that could serve as a trail bed. *Staff responded that it makes sense to look at these access roads as trail beds and it may provide an opportunity to add soft surface trails along the trout brook in the near term and little or no cost.*

A question was raised about whether the proposed concept avoids culturally sensitive sites. *Staff responded that concepts have been developed with the benefit of a cultural landscape survey and that known sensitive sites have been avoided. Staff are beginning to work together with Native American leaders to discuss how to best manage burial mounds and other culturally sensitive sites.*

## **Item IX. Vermillion River Greenway (Hastings) Natural Resource Management Plan – Action (Joe Walton, Parks)**

Joe Walton, Natural Resource Senior Ecologist, presented this item and responded to questions. Staff gave the Planning Commission an overview of the Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) for the Vermillion River Greenway in Hastings. Staff is asking the Planning Commission to release this plan for public comments through the requested action.

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

Planning Commissioners asked about whether the Vermillion River corridor flooded this past season due to historic snowfall amounts. *Staff responded that the Vermillion River has an overflow channel constructed decades ago that mitigates large flood events. The overflow channel has been planted in native grasses and is part of the corridor plan.*

A Commissioner had a question regarding whether land conservation efforts on adjacent land were recorded on property deeds. *Staff explained that the method for protecting restored lands is typically a Joint Powers Agreement between the City and the County.*

It was suggested that volunteers could be recruited to help control invasive species. *Staff responded in agreement and noted the success of using volunteers at Lebanon Hills Regional Park.*

Planning Commissioners inquired about how to manage buckthorn in this corridor. *Staff described the different techniques and how they are applied according to the challenges of each situation.*

Has the Hastings City Council reviewed the Natural Resources Plan? *Staff responded that they would seek support for the plan from the city and will present at committees or the Council as requested.*

**MOTION: Commissioner Rich moved to recommend that staff release this plan for public comment, seconded by Commissioner Graham approving the release of the Vermillion River Greenway Natural Resource Management Plan for public comment. Voice Vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously 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:

- County Board scheduled a public hearing on Parks Ordinance No. 107
- County Board provided direction on the number of memorials in the draft Veterans Memorial Greenway Interpretive Plan

## Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

Dakota County Park Ordinance No. 107 Public Hearing	Tuesday, May 23 at 9am, County Board Room Dakota County Administration Center 1590 Highway 55 Hastings, MN 55033
--	--

## Topics for next meeting (Thursday, June 22, 2023)

Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager, let the Planning Commission know that there is one item on the schedule for next month's meeting:

- Solid Waste Master Plan Update

## Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:

Commissioner Kausel spoke about the recently passed family bathroom bill regarding wheelchair accessibility and adult changing stations.

## Adjournment

Chair Hunting asked for a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION: Commissioner Graham moved, seconded by Commissioner Smith, to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 p.m. Voice Vote: Ayes – 10 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.**

**Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, June 22, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota  
County Western Service Center, Apple Valley**

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator