



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

Date: 11/16/2023

Minutes prepared by Liz Hansen

Location: Western Service Center

## Attendance

### Members Present

- Jerry Rich
- Amy Hunting
- James Guttman
- Nate Reitz
- Tony Nelson
- Kelly Kausel
- Mike Cahn
- Jill Smith
- Dennis Peine

### Member(s) Absent:

- Barry Graham
- Brady Folkestad
- Lori Hansen

### Dakota County staff members attending:

- Kurt Chatfield, Planning Manager
- Niki Geisler, Parks Director
- Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator
- Tony Wotzka, Capital Improvement & Greenways Administrator
- John Mertens, Principal Planner

## Meeting Called to Order

- Time: 7:02 p.m.
- By Planning Commission Chair, Amy Hunting
- Commissioner Reitz joined the meeting at 7:04 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 Hunting asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

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

**MOTION: Commissioner Nelson moved, seconded by Commissioner Smith, approving the agenda. Voice vote: Ayes – 8 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved**

## Approval of Minutes (from October 26, 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 Rich moved, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, approving the previous meeting's minutes. Voice vote: Ayes – 7 – Nays – 0 Abstain – 1 – Approved**

## Item VI. Veterans Memorial Greenway Design/Alignment Study Update - Information (Tony Wotzka – Parks, John Mertens - Planning)

Tony Wotzka, Capital Improvement & Greenways Administrator, and John Mertens, Principal Planner, presented this item. The Planning Commission received a presentation on the route alignment options for the Veterans Memorial Greenway.

A design study has been completed to evaluate the feasibility of locating an off-road road trail parallel to 105th Street, connecting the proposed trailhead at the Rich Valley Athletic Complex with the Mississippi River Greenway to the east. The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed trail alignments along 105th Street.

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

The Planning Commission asked about the original route that was identified in the master plan in comparison to the 105<sup>th</sup> Street route option. *Staff responded that a design study identified significant challenges with the master plan route due to very rugged terrain, environmental impacts, and the difficulty of assembling land for the greenway because of a recent railroad ROW acquisition that interfered with the greenway master plan alignment. As a result, the County began a study of the 105<sup>th</sup> Street route alternative.*

The Planning Commission asked a series of clarifying questions about the Greenway history, phasing, memorials, and funding:

- When the name was changed to Veterans Memorial Greenway, did that allow the County to access additional funding? *Staff responded that renaming the greenway to honor veterans and proposing to locate memorials along the trail was key to receiving state and federal appropriations.*
- When will the funds awarded need to be spent? *Staff responded that there are several funding sources, with some needing to be spent in 2028 and others needing to be spent in 2029. Staff are working on a proposed change to legislative language to consolidate project timeframes and deadlines.*
- Are any of the memorials located along the section of Greenway that would parallel 105<sup>th</sup> Street? *Staff responded that the Native American Veteran Memorial was originally proposed along 105<sup>th</sup> Street but was relocated in response to neighborhood privacy concerns and to take advantage of a more desirable location that became available on the very west end of the greenway off Dodd Road.*
- How does the proposed greenway trail impact neighbors? *Some neighbors have raised concerns about loss of privacy, trash associated with trail users, visibility from their homes, preserving the character of their rural street/neighborhood, and a desire by some to use the street for horseback riding. There are several options along 105<sup>th</sup> Street that have been prepared with varying impacts on adjacent property owners. At least one of those options appears to fit within the existing road right-of-way and does not appear to require permanent easements from adjacent property.*
- Who do we think will use the trail? Will it be pedestrians or bicyclists? *Staff responded that the County anticipates an approximate 50/50 split between pedestrians and bicyclists, similar to other greenway trails.*
- How are drainage, snow storage, and melting being accommodated? *Staff responded that water and snow management are part of the current study and will be coordinated with the City of Inver Grove Heights. Water management will be somewhat dependent on whether the desired roadway design is an urban (with storm sewer) or rural (with ditches) section.*

A question was raised about why some of the options for an off-road trail along 105<sup>th</sup> Street are considered infeasible. *Staff responded that the wider design options that would require the purchase of substantial private property are the ones that have been identified as infeasible for this analysis.*

Planning Commission members discussed the balance between providing a trail along 105<sup>th</sup> Street that would provide an enjoyable trail user experience while limiting impacts to adjacent landowners. The Planning Commission offered the following comments:

- While it may be necessary to use a narrow greenway trail cross-section where landowners are unwilling to sell a portion of land adjacent to 105<sup>th</sup> Street for a permanent easement, the County should use a wider and more typical greenway trail cross-section where landowners are willing sellers. This approach may be most practical for groups of landowners as opposed to having the design change back and forth between individual property owners.

- Since many of the lots along 105<sup>th</sup> Street are deep lots, consider offering to install or pay for vegetative screening on private property for landowners who desire a vegetative buffer between their homes and the road and trail.
- If adjacent landowners are concerned about high vehicle speeds along 105<sup>th</sup> Street today, consider offering to build a narrower roadway along with the trail project, as narrower roadways have been shown to slow driver speeds.
- If there are concerns about trash from trail users, consider a design that places enough trash containers along the route for trash, recycling, and composting.
- If the trail is built too narrow (8'), then bicyclists may be more likely to ride on the adjacent street. If landowners would like to limit bicycles from riding along the street, it might be preferable to build a standard-width greenway trail.
- The County should work with landowners to make sure that the trail and boulevard are designed so that there is room for residents to put their trash cans at the end of their driveways.
- If landowners along 105<sup>th</sup> Street desire to ride horses along the road, the County could explore creating a parallel soft-surface equestrian trail.
- Since trains sometimes block 105<sup>th</sup> Street and the proposed greenway trail, the County should consider locating benches on either side of the railroad crossing. Waste containers could also be located at the crossing.
- Consider working with volunteer groups to designate and adopt a trail group for this segment of the greenway and keep the maintenance levels high.

The Planning Commission concluded their discussion about the 105<sup>th</sup> Street route alternatives with questions about the next steps. Is 105<sup>th</sup> Street a study, or has the County Board adopted the alignment? What is the process moving forward? *Staff responded that currently, the 105<sup>th</sup> Street alignment is a study and that after reviewing the 105 Street design options, the County Board will consider designating 105<sup>th</sup> Street as the preferred alternative for the greenway. If directed by the County Board, staff will continue to work with the City of Inver Grove Heights on a design that will address adjacent property owner concerns and provide a good experience for greenway users.*

## **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:

- Dakota County Commissioners and staff met with Rice County, Northfield, and MN DNR to discuss Mill Towns Trail progress and coordination

## Upcoming Public Meetings – Community Outreach

Lebanon Maintenance Shop Virtual Meeting	November 9 <sup>th</sup> , 6:30pm <a href="https://bit.ly/LH-MF">https://bit.ly/LH-MF</a>
County 42 Western Apple Valley Project Design Kickoff Open House	November 15 <sup>th</sup> , 4:30pm-6:30pm Apple Valley Senior Center, Yosemite Room
Miesville Ravine Park Reserve Long-Range Plan Open House	November 15 <sup>th</sup> , 5pm-6:30pm Cannon River Lutheran Church
Delaware Trail Gap – School Safety Project Open House	November 16 <sup>th</sup> , 5pm-7pm Two Rivers High School, main entrance mezzanine
Vermillion River Watershed Plan Public Meeting	January 16 <sup>th</sup> , 5-7pm Lakeville Water Treatment Facility
Vermillion River Watershed Plan Public Meeting	January 24 <sup>th</sup> , 5-7pm Pleasant Hill Library, Hastings

## Topics for next meeting (Thursday, December 14, 2023)

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

- Mississippi River Greenway – Long Range Plan

## Planning Commissioner Announcements/Updates:

Commissioner Reitz made an announcement that he will not continue serving on the Planning Commission next year. Commissioner Reitz has been serving on the Planning Commission for the last 20 years.

## Adjournment

Chair Hunting asked for a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION: Commissioner Smith moved, seconded by Commissioner Nelson, to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m. Voice Vote: Ayes – 9 – Nays – 0 – Unanimously Approved.**

## Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, December 14, 2023, at 7:00 p.m., Dakota County Western Service Center, Apple Valley

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Hansen, Administrative Coordinator