



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

4B
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: April 12, 2016

Title of Item: Regional Parks and Trails Facilities Master Planning

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	Action Requested: <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing* <small>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</small>
Submitted by: Mark Jacobs		Department: Land Department
Presenter (Name and Title): Mark Jacobs, Land Commissioner		Estimated Time Needed:
Summary of Issue: Please see the attached memo.		
Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:		
Recommended Action/Motion:		
Financial Impact: Is there a cost associated with this request? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$ Is this budgeted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		



AITKIN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

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TO: County Board

FROM: Nathan Burkett 

CC: Mark Jacobs
Ross Wagner
Rich Courtemanche

DATE: March 30, 2016

RE: Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission Grants, Master Plan

At the direction of the Board, those copied on this memo and I met to discuss the process to gain eligibility to apply for Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) grants.

To be eligible for grants through GMRPTC a park or trail must be a “regionally designated” park or trail. To become qualified as a regional park or trail we must submit a master plan. Aitkin County currently has a very robust parks and trails master plan that was approved in 2011. It is a very large document, and can be emailed upon request.

This plan will be submitted to GMRPTC to go through their process of evaluation. We believe that it is likely this master plan will be sufficient with only a few minor adjustments and updates to obtain qualification for the Northwoods Regional ATV Trail.

Presuming we are able to apply for grants we would seek the direction of the Board as to whether or not to apply. Rich attended a workshop on these grant funds, and we are well positioned to have an application reviewed for this funding cycle should the Board direct it. We are seeking to find out if these grant funds can be used for maintenance; but the Board should be aware it is likely given the scoring criteria of GMRPTC that requests for maintenance funding will not score very high; and is somewhat unlikely to be funded.

During our discussion on this plan, regional designation and what projects we might seek funding for, staff agreed that the Board should be aware of the following points:

1. Staff believes that we are at a point in our development of recreational facilities that we should step back to analyze the market for additional facilities in Aitkin County. We believe that the existing recreational facilities offer a wide range of opportunity, but have some concerns that we may be reaching a point that the market for such facilities is saturated, or is soon to become saturated. Prior to additional investment of capital, staff resources and long term maintenance funds we recommend strategic consideration of the market for additional recreational facilities.

2. Staff believes that an in depth review of Aitkin County's recreational facilities and our strategy related to it is in order. Aitkin County has completed, and is currently working on some major projects, but there is a sense that we may need to pivot to maintaining, and creating more "value added" opportunities in or near our current facilities.
3. Staff is concerned that we are becoming stretched with regard to the amount of maintenance funding we have available. Currently our trails are maintained primarily with grant-in-aid funds, and parks are maintained with park funds. Particularly with regard to maintenance of ATV trails; we estimate that we need to increase funding for trail maintenance by between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually in order to keep our trail systems high quality. The existing funding stream is stable, as it is constitutionally dedicated but there will be a need for additional funds in the coming years.
4. At present, we are currently working on adding ATV trails along CR3 near Palisade, a large project in the Mille Lacs area, and a technical riding area near McGregor. The projects are good projects and fit within the overall strategy and master plan, but we are adding trail miles and therefor requirements for staff time in development, implementation, construction, maintenance, administration, etc... In the event the legislature funds the Mille Lacs ATV trail project, our existing staff will be at full capacity during the time period of its development. The Board should be aware that if we were to add an additional large scale project above and beyond the Mille Lacs project we may have to seek contracted, part time or even full time help.

None of these points are meant to dissuade the Board from making the policy decision to seek additional funds to create more recreational opportunities in Aitkin County. I felt it was important that you know some of the concerns and ongoing projects that impact our ability to apply for, effectively implement and maintain any project funded through these grants.

I will place an agenda item on the April 12 agenda to discuss this memo, and this grant program. In the meantime any ideas, comments, etc... from individual commissioners is greatly appreciated.