

Root River Trail Extension - Citizens Exploratory Committee  
Meeting minutes.

Date: January 10, 2024

Location: Houston Nature Center, 215 W Plum St, Houston, MN 55943

## 1. Call To Order, Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 3:38 p.m. by Larry Kirch, City of La Crescent, Community Development Director.

Members Present: Jay Wheaton - Houston, Ben Horn – Houston County, Jason Kraft – Houston County, Larry Stryker – La Crescent, Jake Olson – Hokah, Dick Wieser – La Crescent (remote)

Members Absent: Kevin Walther – Hokah

Others Present: Allison Wagner, Houston County EDA, (remote), Hein Bloem

## 2. September 6, 2023 Minutes - Acceptance

There was no quorum at the last meeting so the minutes are from the September meeting. Larry Kirch asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes. There were no changes or corrections and the minutes were accepted by consensus. Larry corrected the spelling of Hein Bloem's last name.

## 3. Discussion Items -

- a. MnDOT/City Active Transportation Action Plan – MnTH 16 to Miller's Corner – Adopted on December 11<sup>th</sup>
  - i. Additional Technical Assistance from MnDOT - status
  - ii. Transportation Alternatives Grant – \$950,000 Federal request, multi-use path on S Chestnut to Hwy 16 and 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Kistler Court MHP
  - iii. MnDOT State Funded IJA Technical Assistance Program - \$30,000

The City Council approved the MnDOT funded Active Transportation Action Plan on December 11th. Larry is submitting a grant on Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup> for a federal Transportation Enhancements Grant for a trail along south Chestnut from the base of the Wagon Wheel bridge to S 14<sup>th</sup> Street then to Kistler Manufactured Home Park. The city also received word from MnDOT that under the original Active Transportation for the corridor study, the city could receive additional technical assistance from Soma Terra Consulting. The city also, received a technical assistance grant for \$30,000 from MnDOT to help design a trail south to Miller's Corner from S 14th Street. The purpose of the grant is to position the city for future federal applications. The city is also applying for Safe Routes 2 School grant funds along Oak Street to implement the plan.

b. MOA Trail Plan

- i. RRT Extension Houston to La Crescent DNR 2011 Master Plan
- ii. Draft plan, engaging DNR, stakeholders
- iii. SMART, Root River Trail group?, Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota  
“Friends Group”

Larry Kirch mentioned that he had a productive meeting with Kent Skaar and Louise Thompson of the DNR about all the projects related to the Root River Trail that the city and committee are working on. We discussed having the DNR staff come to the March meeting when there may be a new replacement contact for us. It is believed that we are on our 5<sup>th</sup> contact at DNR for this effort over the last 3-4 years. Kent said that the DNR can be supportive and will assist but they can't do a lot until there is funding for the trail. Kent said that he regularly meets with trail group and that there seems to be more progress on trails with regular meetings. Kent also mentioned that the division has some limited funding for acquisition if there are willing sellers. The 2011 trail plan is the approved plan and meets all statutory requirements. He said it would be fine to prepare a short document that presents the work done since 2011.

The group determined that there was no need to create an elaborate trail plan and that Larry should work from the table of contents to create the “trail plan” for purposes of the MOA. Larry Kirch would have that document completed by the March meeting.

c. La Crescent Bike-Ped Grant Applications – Due Feb 1<sup>st</sup>

- i. MnDOT Active Transportation Infrastructure – S 6<sup>th</sup> Street to Aquatic Center path
- ii. MnDOT Safe Routes to School Infrastructure – South Oak Street – S. 14<sup>th</sup> Street

Larry Kirch updated the group on the state DOT applications that are due on February 1<sup>st</sup> for the Active Transportation Infrastructure program. The city will resubmit the project on S 6<sup>th</sup> that creates a corridor connection from S 7<sup>th</sup> through the park and aquatic center to 6<sup>th</sup> street and then to Elm Street. The city is also submitting 5 small projects that were outlined in the Safe Routes to School Plan.

d. Walnut Street Corridor Plan – Funding Applications in process

- i. Great River-Walnut Street Byway Convergence – State Bonding Bill Application
- ii. Walnut Street Streetscaping – MnDEED Small Cities Development Program
- iii. Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) Walnut Street to Veterans Park

The Walnut Street Corridor Plan was approved by the City Council on Monday, December 11<sup>th</sup>. The city has three funding applications in for funding the project including the state bonding bill, the Local Road Improvement Program, and the MnDEED Small Cities Development Program for approximately \$5,000,000 for total project costs. The corridor would include a 10' path along Walnut Street into Veterans Park via Walnut Place with an additional trail from within Veterans Park to Park Street.

- 4. Committee membership status** – Larry asked Jason Kraft to introduce himself as the new member representing Houston County. Jason said he worked for Trek bikes and recently moved to Hokah. Joe Thessing has said that he is more than willing to help the committee in the future. Larry has asked the City of Houston would ask whether Margaret Knutson, who is the Houston Chamber of Commerce Director to be on the committee. Margaret Knutson is on the Root River Trail Towns group. [About \(rootrivertrail.org\)](http://rootrivertrail.org)
- 5. Next Meeting** – March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 3:30 p.m. – Houston Nature Center
- 6. Public Comment** – None
- 7. Adjourn** – the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Meeting minutes drafted by Larry Kirch, City of La Crescent, Community Development Director