

Root River Trail Extension - Citizens Exploratory Committee  
Meeting minutes.

Date: November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Location: Hokah Fire Station, Hokah, MN

**1. Call To Order, Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order at 3:32 p.m. by Larry Kirch, City of La Crescent, Community Development Director.

Members Present: Jay Wheaton - Houston, Larry Stryker – La Crescent, Dick Wieser – La Crescent, Ben Horn – Houston County, Jake Olson – Hokah, Margaret Knutson, Houston

Members Absent: Kevin Walther – Hokah, Jason Kraft – Houston County (excused)

Others Present: Louise Thompson, DNR, Travis Viker, DNR, Lorena Reichert, CEDA/Houston County

**2. November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Minutes - Acceptance**

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.

**3. Discussion Items -**

- a. Draft Joint Powers Agreement – Status - Larry Kirch informed the Committee that the City Attorney was still working on other projects, primarily cannabis regulations that have taken a higher priority. Larry Kirch did provide some sample JPAs to the City Attorney and Larry Kirch attempted to obtain samples from SMART group but did not receive any.
- b. City of La Crescent – MnDOT IJA Transportation Technical Assistance Grant – City to Miller’s Corners – Status – Larry Kirch reported that he had given the City Engineer all the information the city had on the DNR created cross section drawings. WHKS let the city know that they had to obtain some more detailed right-of-way information from the Minnesota DOT. A fuller report will be given at the next meeting on how that grant project is moving along.
- c. City of La Crescent – MnDOT Transportation Alternatives Grant from Wagon Wheel Trail to S. 14<sup>th</sup> Street – Resubmittal – January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Deadline – Larry Kirch said that the city was working to understand the process as there did not seem to be any formal notifications for the Letter of Intent process as there was last year. The city will resubmit and the project will be different and will be on the west side of S. Chestnut Street and tie into the MnDOT intersection project where they are building a trail from the Wagon Wheel Bridge south to the corkscrew path that goes up to Hwy 16. That project is a 2027

project. These funds would be available in 2029. The project would go south along S. Chestnut to S. 14<sup>th</sup> and tie into the project that was awarded Safe Routes to School Funds for a multi-use path to the Kistler Mobile Home Park. Biggest issue seems to be crossing Highway 16 at S. 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

- d. MnDNR Early Acquisition Process – MnDNR staff indicated that the process is for multiple properties that have logical start and end points. It would not work for the purchase of a single parcel that has the abandoned railroad corridor on it.
- e. MnDNR – Funding Source used for Land Acquisition in corridor for Sather Property – MnDNR Staff asked for more clarification on this subject during the meeting. Larry Kirch said he will email information to Louise Thompson that has the property deeds and references the trail easement. The easement does not show up on the DNR Website for public lands, but the surrounding land that was acquired is depicted on the maps. Larry Kirch provided a color screen shot of the MnDNR web map. Larry Kirch is tracking down the maps from Paragon and Associates who surveyed the property. All this information will be sent to the DNR in the hopes that this issue can be clarified.
- f. Review Survey Parcels Legals Info – Larry Kirch rolled out the long aerial photo and walked through the corridor for everyone and showed the color coding he finally finished of all publicly owned property in the Root River Valley.

Larry Kirch signed up for “updates” on the USDOT website for the Federal Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) Planning and Design Grant that was submitted on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024. There is no indication that any announcements will be made before January.

#### **4. Trail Organizations – Memberships**

- a. Larry Kirch let the committee know that he had been going to some of the meetings over the summer for the Root River Trail Towns organization
- b. Larry Kirch has also been attending the SMART meetings. They are held virtually every quarter. Dues are due soon and are \$25.00 per year. The City of La Crescent renewed its memberships in the Rails to Trails Conservancy, the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota and the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota. Both the Parks and Trails Council and the Minnesota Bicycle Alliance wrote letters of support for the ATIIP Federal Grant.

#### **5. Public Comment – None**

**6. Next Meeting** – December 11<sup>th</sup> in Houston, MN

**7. Adjourn** – the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

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