

Clay County Heartland Trail Task Force Meeting Minutes
January 29th, 2018 – 1:30 pm
Clay County Highway Building

Attendees

Dan Farnsworth, Metro COG
Erik Hove, Clay County Highway Dept
Jay Leitch, Buffalo - Red River Watershed District
Frank Gross, Clay County Commission
Kent Eken, MN State Senator
Lisa Jetvig, City of Hawley
Rich Weaver, Hawley Township
Jim Aasness, City of Dilworth
Tony Bormann, MSUM Science Center
Tim Magnusson, Clay County Planning
Brian Winter, The Nature Conservancy
Tim Williamson, MN DNR
Patrick Hollister, PartnerSHIP 4 Health
Ben Lien, MN State Representative
Grant Weyland (via phone), Clay County Commission

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Meeting Minutes from August 24th meeting

Meeting minutes from the August 24th meeting were reviewed. A motion to move the minutes was made by J. Aasness and seconded by T. Magnusson. The minutes were approved unanimously with no edits.

3. Updates since August 24th meeting

D. Farnsworth provided the group with an update on the efforts made since the last Clay Co. Heartland Trail Task Force meeting on August 24th. These efforts included the following:

- Worked with Representative Ben Lien in developing the 2018 Heartland Trail Bonding Bill
 - The Buffalo River SP to Hawley Heartland Trail Subcommittee continued to meet on a monthly / bimonthly basis
 - In early January 2018, Metro COG and some other Heartland Trail members attended the Hawley Township Board meeting where there was discussion regarding the 12th Ave S corridor along which the Heartland Trail is proposed. This discussion was in regards to the housing development in the vicinity.
 - Discussed recent efforts in developing a landowner letter and press release to distribute in the near future to notify the public of the status of the Clay County Heartland Trail.
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D. Farnsworth also provided the group with an update on the status of the Heartland Trail between Detroit Lakes and Frazee. The update was provided via an email from the Becker County Heartland Trail group.

4. Discuss proposed 2018 Heartland Trail Bonding Bill

The group then discussed the upcoming 2018 MN bonding bill session for which the group intends to have language in the bill for funding predesign / design of the Heartland Trail in Clay Co. D. Farnsworth mentioned that he has been working with Representative Lien and the Clay County Heartland Trail group in developing a draft bill.

The proposed bill will ask for \$500,000 for predesign / design of the trail in Clay County with the remainder of the funds to be used for predesign / design of the trail in Becker County. It was asked why the amount increased from \$200,000 in previous bills to \$500,000 in this bill. It was stated that the intent this time would be to study the entire length of Clay County rather than just a segment.

D. Farnsworth asked about the best ways to help advocate for this bill. Senator Eken suggested that if possible, try and schedule brief meetings with the following:

- Senate Bonding Committee Chair (David Senjem – R) (also invite Senator Eken, Bruce Albright, and Tim Williamson)
- House Bonding Committee Chair (Dean Urdahl – R) (also invite Representative Lien, Bruce Albright, and Tim Williamson)
- Senate (Majority) Leader (Paul Gazelka – R) (also invite Senator Eken, Bruce Albright, and Tim Williamson)
- House (Majority) Leader (Joyce Peppin – R) (also invite Representative Lien, Bruce Albright, and Tim Williamson)

It was suggested that when meeting with legislators, to provide a one-page handout which would include a map of the entire Clay Co Heartland Trail. The handout should also showcase efforts already made (signal in Hawley, working with developer in Hawley Township, Glyndon Parke Ave project, Hawley TA application).

Other suggested ways to advocate for the bill would be:

- Reach out to other neighboring Senators & Representatives
- Letters of support
 - Metro COG will send a letter of support template to various jurisdictions and they can approve the letters at their next council meetings. The goal would be for Metro COG to submit all the letters of support by Feb 20th.



5. Discuss letter to property owners

The group discussed the proposed letter to property owners and a proposed press release. It was discussed that building a relationship with property owners is key and keeping them informed about the Heartland Trail status would help build their trust with the Heartland Trail effort. There was discussion about whether it would be better to provide them with a status update before or after the legislative session. After discussion, it seemed best to let them know before the session so there would be surprises to them if they hear about funding being received for pre-design / design of the trail.

The plan would be to send the letter out to landowners in the near future. In addition, Metro COG will send a press release to local news outlets in the rural area. Metro COG will work with the City of Hawley in sending a press release to the Hawley Herald which may occur after they know more about their TA funding. It was also suggested that we could send information to the electric coops in the area since they have a newsletter. These would include: Red River Electric Coop (will do article if/when legislative funding is received) and the Wild Rice Electric Coop (their articles are only industry-related).

The group recommended a few changes to the letter:

- Include signature of Task Force Chair (Dan Farnsworth)
- At bottom of letter, list agencies involved.

6. Other business / comments

It was discussed that the City of Hawley is currently applying for a TA grant for the Heartland Trail through Hawley.

Meeting adjourned.
