

**Town of Duluth
Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
November 19, 2015**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Chair, Paul Voge.

Present: Paul Voge, Jo Thompson, Wayne Dahlberg, Jerry Hauge, and Larry Zanko

Absent: Brigid Pajunen, John Schifsky

Also present: Sue Lawson, Planning Director; and Don Sitter, Town Board Supervisor and liaison to the Commission

The agenda was approved as presented.

The minutes were approved with the following changes: Brigid Pajunen had been listed as absent but was present and in line 10 replace the word “mass” with “scale.”

Sue introduced Stacey and Shelley Seering. They have an Interim Use permit for a short-term rental called Singing Waters on their property. The Interim Use permit was granted in February of 2014 for a duration of two years. They said that they have had great success with the rental and would like to convert the Interim Use to a Conditional Use. Stacey said that his original request was for a Conditional Use, but the Planning Commission decided, given the potential for issues with short-term rentals, on a two year Interim Use. Since then, they have rented the property 83 times and they feel that there have been no issues.

The Commission discussed what would be required for a new hearing. They decided that because there were no substantive changes from the original application that that original application could be used for the new hearing. They decided to not charge the full fee for a Conditional Use application, but instead charge for just the costs involved, i.e., the advertising and notification costs and filing fees. The hearing was set for January 28, 2016. The area of notification would be the same as before, one-quarter mile from the subject property plus all of the property owners on Wildwood Road west of Homestead.

Jo made a motion to hold a public hearing to hear the Seering’s original application for a short-term rental as a conditional use on January 28, 2016. The area of notification will be the same and a new community participation report will not be required. The fee will be a reduced fee of 100 dollars to cover costs.

Jerry seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Sue introduced James Gittemeir of the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council to present the draft trails plan.

James presented the working draft trails plan that was developed through working with the Trails Steering Committee, incorporating information obtained from a survey of Township residents and a trails open house. He will have the formal draft plan to the Commission for the January meeting.

James reviewed the Township survey results. There were 89 responses to the survey. The largest percentage of people responding was in the age group of 59-70 years old. Then 30-49 years old. A high percentage of respondents walked or biked for recreation on a regular basis. In addition, the

number of people who walked or biked for transportation was higher than expected. When asked if they would like to see trails or pathways along Township roads, 75% said yes. Most respondents preferred a multiuse trail next to the road over lanes on the road or paved shoulder. 46% stated a preference for paved trails while 39% said they had no preference and 14% preferred gravel trails.

The most frequent written comment was that roads are dangerous for pedestrians.

Regarding trails in the vicinity of North Shore Community School, James plotted the addresses of students attending the school. There are 325 students. Of those students, 5 live within 1 mile of the school and 32 live within 2 miles of the school. In addition, he said that for whatever reason, middle school students tend to not ride their bikes to school.

The proposed priority for trails was

1) Ryan Road to Lake Superior– 3.05 miles (2.83 mi natural surface trail, .22 mi paved shoulder), cost estimate \$200,000, which does not include crossing Highway 61.

2) NSCS to the Town Hall along Lismore, Bergquist and Shilhon – 4.93 mi (1.46 natural surface trail, cost estimate \$73,000, and 3.47 mi existing gravel roads, cost estimate \$0).

3) Old North Shore Rd from Ryan Rd to Homestead – 3.24 mi, cost estimate \$245,000 (520 ft natural surface trail - \$5,000, Schmidt River bridge - \$90,000, Sucker River bridge - \$150,000). Regarding bridges, St Louis County said that the Township would be responsible for maintenance and inspection of bridges.

4) Homestead Road from Old North Shore Road to the Town Hall – 1.5 mi natural surface trail; cost estimate \$75,000.

5) Shilhon Road to community of Knife River – 2.77 mi, cost estimate \$242,000 (.34 mi natural surface trail - \$17,000, 2.43 mi existing gravel road - \$0, Knife River bridge - \$225,000).

Cost estimates are just for construction, not for purchasing easements. A lot of the Duluth trails are being built by professional trail builders. In addition there would be signage, including a logo, destinations, arrows, and distances.

James said that the North Shore corridor is considered a prominent area in trails planning and these trails would make connections to the corridor.

The part of Homestead Road north of the Town Hall is in the plan as a low priority because for it to become a part of the trail plan, major and costly improvements would have to be made to it. James said that he would not even consider signing Homestead now because it is not safe. The Commission recommended putting north Homestead in the draft plan as priority 5, bumping Shilhon to Knife River to 6. It was felt that this portion of Homestead had high use with the most danger. If it were in the plan as a priority, it would carry more weight the next time the County redoes the road.

James said that if off road natural trails become a reality the Town would own them. This would include maintenance and liability. He does not yet have estimates on maintenance costs. The frequency of regravelling is one of the main cost factors.

Jo asked about snowmobiles.

Sue said that 80% of respondents did not want multi-use motorized trails.

Paul asked how often the Town can amend the trails plan.

James said it would be the Town's prerogative. In a way, it is a part of the CLUP, so it could be reviewed when the CLUP is reviewed.

Sue said that the plan will come to the Commission as a draft and the Commission will make recommendations to the Board.

James said that he could provide a map with the overall vision for trails in the Township and a map with trails that the Township can realistically move forward on.

Director's Report

Sue said that the January meeting will include Commission review of the draft trail plan, the Seering CUP hearing and possibly a hearing for a gallery on Stony Point.

Paul said that Brigid's term will be up in March so there will be an open seat on the Commission. Jo's term is up also, but she is eligible to serve another term. Jo said that she will serve a second term.

Concerns from the Audience

Don reminded everyone about the holiday potluck, Thursday December 10 immediately following the Board meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10.