

**Lake Vermillion Trail Joint Powers Board
Wednesday, March 8, 2023
Via Zoom or teleconference**

Joint Powers Board (JPB) members present:

Tim Johnson, Cook, Chair, via Zoom
Cathi Hiveley, Beatty, Secretary, via Zoom
Steve Lotz, Vermilion Lake, Treasurer, via Zoom
Carol Booth, Owens via Zoom
Nancy Salminen, Tower via Zoom
Mike Ralston, Greenwood via Zoom
Absent: Bois Forte & Kugler

Guests: Mandie Aalto, contractor with the Friends of the LVT and Lee Peterson, area resident

Chair Tim Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm. The agenda was accepted.

Approval of minutes – Motion by Carol Booth, Owens, second by Nancy Salminen, Tower, to approve the January 11, 2023 meeting minutes as previously distributed, six ayes, no nays, two absent, motion carried.

Reports of Officers & Committees:

Treasurer's report – Steve Lotz reported a balance as of February 28, 2023 of \$1,389.49 after payment of the League of MN Cities Insurance Trust renewal on February 16. Premium was a \$4.00 increase over 2022. Payment was approved at the January 11 meeting. Motion by Nancy Salminen, Tower, second by Cathi Hiveley, Beatty & Mike Ralston, Greenwood, to approve the Treasurer's report, no discussion, six ayes, no nays, two absent, motion carried. The Treasurer noted that 2023 dues invoices would be going out in March.

Bills – none.

Audit Committee –Nancy Salminen, Tower, and Tim Johnson, Cook, audited the Treasurer's books and found them to be in order. Cathi Hiveley asked what the audit involved. The Treasurer had provided the Audit Committee copies of the Treasurer's report covering 2022, the beginning and ending bank statements, and all the invoices paid. Motion by Cathi Hiveley, Beatty, second by Carol Booth, Owens, to accept the report of the Audit Committee finding the Treasurer's books in order, no further discussion, six ayes, no nays, two absent, motion carried.

Business

Field work – the MN DNR Special Use Permits for field work for the east and west segments have both expired over the winter. Motion by Tim Johnson, Cook, second by Mike Ralston, Greenwood, to designate Carol Booth to facilitate the renewal of the Special Use Permits, no further discussion, six ayes, no nays, two absent, motion carried.

East segment – waiting on the Mesabi Trail and snow melt.

West segment – discussions with area landowners continue.

Grant writing – the IRRR grant writing grant funds are to be spent by the end of the year.

Mesabi Trail management of the LVT – Nancy Salminen and Steve Lotz met with Sarah Ciochetto at Mesabi Station, Eveleth on January 26. Options identified were to continue as we have been doing by meeting and corresponding informally using them as a resource for all manner of trail related information or to approach the Rail Authority with a formal proposal for assistance with the Lake Vermilion Trail. Nancy Salminen's report of the meeting follows these minutes. The consensus is that there would be much discussion and work to be done before we would be ready to meet with the Rail Authority.

Carol continues to work with ARDC to get current information on the Trail's website.

Tim will be meeting with area legislators at the Capital next week.

Some files, the banners and table covering, and other items that have been stored at a hangar at the Cook Airport will be moved to available space at Tim Johnson's State Farm Office in Cook where it will be available during regular office hours.

Lee Peterson had forwarded information about possible SLC improvements for Howard Gnesen Road in the Duluth/Rice Lake area including eight-foot shoulders and asked the JPB to request similar improvements to CR 77 & 115 for the LVT. In discussion that followed there was support for wider shoulders generally but no interest was expressed in utilizing the 77 and 115 shoulders as a route for the LVT as the trail vision and Master Plan do not include extensive use of road shoulders as a desired trail location.

Next meeting is set for April 12, 2023 at 5:00 pm via Zoom. Annual election of officers will be a part of the April meeting.

There being no further discussion the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.

Steve Lotz, Friends of the Lake Vermilion Trail Secretary

Meeting with Sarah Ciochetto Mesabi Trail, January 26, 2023 Mesabi Station, Eveleth

Steve and I met with Sarah about possible coordination with the Mesabi Trail in developing and managing the Lake Vermilion Trail.

Sarah said we could approach the Rail Authority with a proposal to help us with the Lake Vermilion Trail and that now would be a better time to approach them as the Mesabi Trail is near Completion. Alternately, we could continue to meet or correspond informally as we have been doing.

She mentioned that if we chose to go with a formal agreement and we might have to adopt the Mesabi Trail designation and call the Lake Vermilion Trail a spur or extension of the Mesabi. The agreement would spell out the details and working arrangement between our Board and the Rail Authority.

The Rail Authority has an engineering contractor, a grant coordinator, real estate lawyers, a lobbyist at the Capitol, fiscal agent status, and a history of successful project completion with fiscal integrity. These assets would help the Lake Vermilion Trail if an agreement was reached.

We asked Sarah how she envisioned us working together under an agreement. She said she could coordinate the submission of information to their specialists and we would be responsible for pulling together the information that they need. For example, the note from public meetings, wetland reports, easement information. We mentioned the pro bono lawyer willing to work on easements for us.

Sarah said she would type up the typical steps they take to get a section of trail built

She did mention that we should present options at a public meeting for each trail segment to show the public that we considered other options. She said it is important to get the easements executed before we go for grants. She said that the current cost of trail for them is \$350-\$400 per mile and easements are running \$1000 per acre.

We asked about how they come up with matches for the grants they apply for. They sometimes match Federal with State grants, They also get money the state Bonding Bill, Transportation Alternatives, IRRB, and the Legacy Fund.

She mentioned that it would be great to have Our Friends Group partner with Club Mesabi to sponsor events or promote the trails. This would likely be after we have a section or sections built.

Sarah said she would contact Steve when they do the fieldwork this spring to connect Tower to the rest of the trail.

I asked about maintenance of the Lake Vermilion Trail and she said we could just contract with them. It would be a set amount for the year.

We could meet with the rail authority at one of their monthly meetings and present our proposal.

Nancy Salminen