

**NORTH DAKOTA**

Recreational Trails Program Advisory Committee (RTPAC) Meeting

August 5, 2020

1:00PM - Microsoft Meeting Live

PRESENT:

- **NDPRD:**
  - Jolene Rieck, Chief of Planning and Programs
  - Char Binstock, Grants Coordinator
  
- **RTPAC Members:**
  - *Non-Motorized*
    - Simon Pryor, (Mountain Biking), Cass County
    - Dave Mayer, (At Large), Burleigh County
    - Glee Mayer, (Paddling), Ward County
    - Andy Banta, (Hiking), Williams County
    - Jeannie Schmidt, (Equestrian), Stutsman County
  - *Motorized*
    - Dale Heglund, (Snowmobile), Burleigh County
    - Nick Lippert, (Off-Highway Vehicle), Williams County
  
- **NDDOT:**
  - Pam Wegner, NDDOT TA Coordinator

ABSENT:

- Dave Bietz, (At Large), Cass County

**ND Parks & Recreation Department Grants Coordinator, Char Binstock, NDPRD**

Char welcomed everyone to the virtual presentation and thanked the RTPAC for sending in their final scoring in preparation for the meeting. This year, there were 20 applications totaling \$2.6 million with approximately \$1 million available to award.

*1:10PM – Review of Current FY20 Projects*

1. Char explained to the board that she is closing out FY18 projects. She has one project left in which they are submitting their final reimbursement for closure.
2. As for FY19 projects, about half of the projects have closed. The end dates are not until 2021, so they are on course.
3. For FY20 projects, most of the projects have just commenced. There is one project on course to finish this summer which is the MDHTA – Sully Creek Restoration and Surfacing. They are submitting their reimbursements. There have been some delays on projects due to COVID-19, but most are still on track.

*1:15PM – Discussion of Final Project Rankings*

- Jolene asked if Char could explain the process for the allocation of funds to meet FHWA obligations. Char mentioned that all the funding needs to be allocated by September 1, 2020. We do have some unexpended funds due to projects closing out under their original estimated budget.

- Char called for a motion for *authorization from the RTPAC to authorize any unobligated funding as the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD) sees fit*. This is in response so that NDPRD can timely allocate any unexpended funds as to not risk losing them from the program. Andy motioned. Glee second. Jolene called all in favor. Approved. Motion passed.

**Discussion:**

1. Andy asked if there was a list on where that money might go. Char mentioned that NDPRD was planning on allocating the funding for projects this year.
2. Andy asked if they would need to spend it right away. Char mentioned that they would not. It just needs to be approved and allocated through FHWA by September 1.
3. Nick asked if we asked if we are proposing to allocate these funds into this year’s project and not trying to fund the runner-up projects from last year. Char mentioned that NDPRD is just requesting the authority to allocate those funds as we see fit due to time constraints and the feasibility of allocating those funds.
4. Dave mentioned that last year we tried to do this, but funding was taken away by FHWA. Jolene mentioned that this was not accurate, and all funds were allocated from last year. She mentioned that every year we have excess funds, so we take those funds and allocate them to projects that have possibly fell short. This usually happens in the background administratively between NDPRD and FHWA.
5. Nick mentioned that if the funding does not come through this year’s crop (due to the transportation bill expiring) will the project be required to spend those funds. Jolene mentioned it could potentially create an issue so the project that is allocated the unexpended obligation amount will be required to pay the full cost of the project.

**Char reviewed the final ranking of the projects. She addressed the projects from the highest point totals to the lowest. Please see the table below.**

Rank	Project Sponsor	Project Name	Average Score	Requested Grant
1	U.S. Forest Service	Pioneer Maah Daah Hey Gulch	15.91	\$ 18,400.00
2	Barnes County Park Board	Riding Brush Mower	13.91	\$ 11,952.94
3	North Dakota Parks and Recreation Dept.	Lewis & Clark Prairie Nature Trail	13.73	\$ 98,993.38
4	Maah Daah Hey Trail Association	Coal Creek Trail Restoration	12.36	\$ 61,600.00
5	Hunter/Arthur JPA	Northern Cass Pass	12.27	\$ 128,000.00
6	Maah Daah Hey Trail Association	Sully Restoration Surfacing	12.00	\$ 54,400.00
7	North Dakota Parks and Recreation Dept.	2020 Snowmobile Update	10.36	\$ 200,000.00
8	City of Harvey	Pedestrian Pathway	10.27	\$ 200,000.00
9	Bottineau Park District	Forestry Park Trail	9.64	\$ 196,000.00
10	Fargo Park District	Bison Village Trail	9.55	\$ 200,000.00
11	Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation	Point to Point Trail (Phase II)	9.45	\$ 131,665.00
12	City of Hillsboro	Riverwalk Trail System	9.36	\$ 160,000.00
13	Bottineau County	Metigoshe Oak Creek Crossing	9.00	\$ 110,121.00
14	West Fargo Park District	Winter Grooming	8.82	\$ 39,119.00
15	Bismarck Parks and Recreation District	Ashe Coulee	7.82	\$ 200,000.00
16	City of Velva	Shared Use Path to Velva	7.18	\$ 200,000.00

17	City of Grafton	Bike Path Overlay	7.09	\$	155,131.60
18	City of Abercrombie	Pathway	4.82	\$	21,410.00
19	City of Horace	County Road 17 Phase II	3.36	\$	200,000.00
20	City of New Town	Lake Access Trail	3.09	\$	200,000.00

**TOTALS**

**\$ 2,586,792.92**

**FY21 Estimated Obligation**

**Authority\***

**\$ 874,038.00**

\*The FAST Act expires on September 30. There is no guarantee that the RTP program will continue with similar funding until an extension or new bill is passed. Amount is based on FY20 funding levels.

1. Nick asked about if the Barnes County application was a motorized application. Char explained that although it is a motorized piece of equipment that would be used for non-motorized trail use (ex. maintaining the NCT for walking/hiking) it is not considered a motorized use application. She explained the only motorized application is the NDPRD -2020 Snowmobile Update because of the support of the motorized use of snowmobiling.
2. Nick asked if the Hunter/Arthur JPA Northern Cass Pass project was the final portion of the project. Char mentioned it was. They have submitted grants since 2014, so this will be the final phase to completion of the trail. Nick said that it is good to see this project end.

Char explained that with the estimated FY21 amounts. *Eight projects would be able to be funded with a total of \$773,346.32.* Bottineau Park District – Forestry Project Trail would put us over the allocated amount (by almost \$100,000). *The U.S. Forest Service to the City of Harvey would be funded, but we should select two alternates just in case there is a project withdrawal.*

1. Nick stated that with the unobligated allocation of last year's funding then Bottineau Park District -Forestry Park Trail would be able to be funded potentially. Char agreed.
2. Dave made mention that a smaller purchase such as the West Fargo Park District – Winter Grooming equipment (\$39,119.00) would be a good way to have a smaller project to use up any additional funds to fund a full project.
3. Andy suggested using part of the money for a groomer if they have a machine. Glee asked to make sure that they have the means (equipment/OHV) to pull equipment.
4. Simon suggested that maybe we should fund a project that will get more usage. Glee made a point that the City of Abercrombie application may connect to the North Country Trail. This should be considered when deciding.
5. Andy said it is tough to reevaluate the criteria when the decision has already been made. Dave cautioned on making assumptions that the City of Abercrombie will be incorporated into the North Country Trail. The North Country Trail would reroute depending on the availability and feasibility of the trail.
6. Dave made mention that last year the projects were funded based on how they were ranked. He suggested that we should keep moving down the line and offer any remaining/unexpended funds to the next project and let the applicants decided if they can move forward with there project. If not, we would move to the next project. He would like to remain consistent in how we allocate funds in the past.

7. Char made a motion *to continue what we have done last year with allocating the funds according to the list*. Jolene advised Char that this is an advisory committee to the NDPRD Director, and the roll of the committee is to evaluate the projects and provide the suggested list to her. In the past, the director has usually followed the recommendations of the RTPAC.
- *Char called for a motion to final the list to be submitted to NDPRD Director, Andrea Travnicek, Ph.D. for approval. Andy approved. Dave second. Motion passed.*
  - Nick mentioned that the sidewalk related projects ranked low. He asked the board for their thoughts. Glee said she evaluated projects based on their need for completion. She said so many dollars were invested already so why not finish the project right. Jolene made mention that the RTP does not fund for sidewalks. She said that Char will work to educate applicants on the requirements of the RTP and send corresponding applications to the right programs such as the TA program.
  - Char reviewed the RTP and project timeline. She made mention that they hope to offer an RTP workshop to make sure that all the applicants are Title VI compliant. There is still a 6 to 9 month waiting period from application submittal to project start.
  - Andy asked Char to review the Title VI requirements. Char made mention of the non-discrimination policy statement and why Title VI is an important aspect of the RTP.
  - Glee asked for clarification on the allocation of unexpended funds. Jolene explained that as projects close out under budget the funds roll over. Often, they accumulate throughout the year and as the construction season ends, we get project close-outs and leftover funding dumped on us. The easiest way to allocate those funds is to allocate it to projects that require a quick turnaround. There is a lot of administrative work that we do in the background. The environmental clearances take 30 days at a minimum. Sometimes, it takes a long time to clear projects for FHWA approval.

## **Discussions & Questions**

Jolene mentioned the NDPRA conference in Bismarck on September 15 through the 17<sup>th</sup>. Char showed the RTPAC the website. Jolene cautioned that the conference is still on amid COVID-19, but please check the website for updates.

Nick found that the applicant presentations were helpful. He mentioned that it would be a good idea for the board to have an orientation/pre-meeting to discuss ranking. Char thought that was a good idea and hopefully we can meet in person next year as in the past.

Glee said that time was of the essence and could use an additional meeting to assess the applications. Andy enjoyed the presentations and appreciated the formatting to a virtual setting.

Char said that this addition of the applicant presentations seemed to go well and benefited the RTPAC. We will keep this format. Simon agreed with Nick and Glee that a pre-ranking meeting would be beneficial. Jolene suggested an advisory committee orientation. This would be beneficial to interpret the RTP manual and go over program requirements.

Char thanked the board for their time. *Char called to adjourn the meeting. Andy motioned to adjourn. Glee second the motion. Meeting adjourned at 2:07PM.*