

PECATONICA PRAIRIE TRAIL COMMISSION

**Friday, March 21, 2025
Pecatonica Public Library
400 W. 11th Street
Pecatonica, Illinois
9:30 a.m.**

MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order Meeting called to order at 9:35

1. Roll Call

Directors Present: Tim Bragg, Alt. Delegate, Rockford Park District; Steve Ehlbeck, Delegate, Freeport Park District (Retired) Carlos Molina, Delegate, Winnebago County Highway Department, Jim Gastel, Delegate, Stephenson County and Rob Boyer, Delegate, City of Freeport.

Others Present: Eric Moe, Rich Backeberg, Mike Brien, Joey Dienberg, Ernie Fuhr, Denny Gulotta, Wendy Gulotta, Alice Hasting, Don Hasting, Mark Hazzard, Robert Hunter, Chad Insko, Russell Kaney, Janet Klinger, Neil Ritter, Rick Sager, Carla Vassmer and Greg Vassmer.

2. Approval of Minutes – December 13, 2024

Rob Boyer moved, Carlos Molina seconded approval of the meeting minutes from the December 13, 2024, meeting. Motion passed.

3. Presentation-

None.

4. Treasurer's Report – (Steve E.) Steve Ehlbeck distributed the report which reflected a General Account balance \$57,390.52(Operational Acct: \$16,195.58; Special Accounts: \$41,194.58) through December 2024. Carlos Molina moved, Jim Gastel seconded a motion to place the Treasurer's report on file. Motion passed. The motion was further affirmed by a unanimous voice vote of all commissioners present.

5. Special Accounts Reports

See meeting agenda item #4.

6. Legislation – (25-001) DRAFT- Resolution Establishing the Pecatonica Trail Commission Budget for FY 2026, 2027 & 2028.

The Commission discussed the proposed resolution. Said discussion was a first reading, with a vote on the resolution scheduled for the June 2025 meeting. The budget stood at the historical \$1,000 /year annual commitment per agency, but expense details for FY 2026 may require an adjustment as the committee awaits estimates for brochure printing costs

7. Reports

a. Staff

Winnebago County (Carlos M.)

Winnebago County Highway staff extended thanks to trail users for their ongoing comments about trail issues/conditions. Staff continues to work on sign fabrication to replace damaged/missing trail signage. Brochure boxes and railings damaged by ComEd /vendors are also in the queue for repairs/replacement. The Village of Winnebago staff has followed up with addressing trail holes/ruts left by ComEd vendors. Additional discussion included thoughts of adding stickers on path signs with information regarding the trail website and vetting out locations for additional brochure boxes.

Mark Hazzard thanked the Commission for their continued support (even with the recent short snowmobile season due to mild weather). He may ask for further support as the snowmobile user group looks to lobby for the RTP grant funding (Recreational Trails Program).

Tim Bragg announced the Rockford Park District was denied again for an RCP grant (Reconnecting Communities Program). Staff is awaiting word from the grantor for a grant application debriefing session.

Stephenson County (Steve E.)

No significant update. Freeport/Stephenson County still needs to secure funding for the trail extensions (U.S. Bypass 20-Wwinnebago county-line).

Publicity/Marketing

Arrangements have been made with the person who worked on the original PPT brochure to make the current updates to the brochure. We will have printer quotes for the June PPT meeting. Issues regarding website links taking webpage users to non-PPT content have been resolved. Additional work is needed to address minor font/formatting matters.

Commissioner Ehlbeck thanked Greg Vassmer for the recent article in the *Rock Valley Press* regarding the trail.

8. Old Business-

A public bike repair station location in Pecatonica and possibly Winnebago has yet to be determined. Meeting attendees discussed the potential of the installation becoming an opportunity for an Eagle Scout volunteer project.

9. New Business

Commissioner Ehlbeck discussed recent efforts to resurrect attention to the Grand Illinois Trail (GIT - the Pec Prairie Trail is a segment of the 500+ mile statewide trail). A Zoom meeting took place this past January and again two weeks ago, with numerous entities represented. The group plans to reconvene in the fall. Plans for the group include a letter to the governor's office asking the state/state agencies like IDNR support completion of the trail. Talks are in the early stage of developing a steering committee to define future tasks, for example, conveying the economic impact the GIT can have once fully completed, and being a point-of-contact with State agencies. Commission members were asked to check with their respective organizations about supporting these efforts (and partner agencies, like tourism bureaus and/or business chamber organizations), as well as, suggesting a representative(s) on the Steering Committee from the Rockford and Freeport region.

Commissioner Molina moved, Commissioner Boyer, seconded a motion to approve the Pecatonica Prairie Trail Commission be added to the list of entities for the outgoing letter to Governor Pritzker.

Meeting attendees discussed whether fees generated from Winnebago County hosting a landfill site could go towards path maintenance. Commissioner Molina stated he would follow up with a member of the Winnebago County Board.

Gregg Vassmer stated that efforts are nearly complete towards the formation of the not-for-profit/ 501c3 “Friends of Pecatonica Prairie Trail”. This group will also be a mechanism for future fundraising for trail initiatives.

Mr. Molina mentioned the upcoming Ironman event in the Rockford area on June 22nd. Mr. Bragg mentioned that the R1PC (Region 1 Planning Council) regional path/trails inventory.

10. **Adjourn / Recess**

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 am. The next meeting will take place on June 20, 2025.