

TO: Parks and Recreation Committee
FROM: Daniel Eick, Assistant City Administrator
RE: Chiarella Trail Update
DATE: December 7, 2023



Summary

Throughout the Master Planning process, the Parks and Recreation Committee has voiced a desire for City staff to contact the MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to engage in conversations regarding ownership and maintenance of the Chiarella Forest Management Area. Pursuant to this request, Public Works Supervisor Joe Zierden contacted several individuals at the DNR to inquire about the City's role in management of the area. A brief outline of his findings are provided below.

Outline of Findings

In conversation with the DNR their representative informed City Staff they are not able to donate the land in question. Furthermore, staff were informed the Chiarella Forest Management Area has several deed restrictions that forbid the DNR from selling the property or allowing private easements across it.

Furthermore, an Area Forest Supervisor informed staff the trail system on the property in question was installed by the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway illegally. The system in its current state lacks a lease and, as such, is an illegal trail system. The DNR did initially request they place the system under lease, but the Scenic Byway declined which is why the trail is not currently being maintained.

The DNR may be open to discussing a lease to the City of Breezy Point for a walking trail system in the future but need to ensure they are legally able to do so first.

Committee Action

Staff recommend the Parks and Recreation Committee revisit their consideration of the Chiarella Trail System in two ways.

1. Current references to the Forest Management Area and Trail system in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan must either be removed or substantially altered.
2. Considering this information, the Committee should reassess their future planning as it relates to the Forest Management Area.