

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Agenda Item Memo

DATE: June 17, 2014

SUBJECT: Amending LSOHC travel and tour policies and procedures

PRESENTER: Bill Becker, LSOHC

Background:

Government and non-government habitat conservation organizations have approached the LSOHC with invitations to tour habitat projects they have accomplished. They have also invited members to events related to the work they do. The groups offering invitations need policy to determine how to structure tours and offer invitations and guidance on how to comply with the laws under which the council works, such as the Open Meeting Law and the grant making rules. Each member has a responsibility to manage their attendance to uphold the requirements of the statutes as it applies to the LSOHC. Overarching this task, the LSOHC needs procedures to manage these invitations in the interest of the LSOHC.

Staff reviewed the procedure and found the following:

- The current council procedures are a reasonable framework on which to build a policy for participating in these events.
- The current council policy is vague in regard to agency, organization and other levels of government event attendance.
- There are no standards, benchmarks, or criteria for evaluating an event's importance.
- The reporting requirement is cumbersome for multiple attendees to the same event.
- The travel procedures warrant a section in the manual.

Suggested Motion:

Move to approve travel and tour policies as presented by staff. (See strike-out and underline of travel section document)

Suggested Procedure:

Place the motion before the Council for discussion. Council votes on procedure amendment as needed. Instructions to staff, if passed, to review travel procedures as presented and discussed and place new procedures in their own section. Re-number procedures as needed.

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TRAVEL PROCEDURES

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council supports its members' and staffs' need to acquire additional information regarding habitat issues outside of official council meetings. The Council has developed policies in this regard.

In response to a written request from a Council member, the Council's Chair and the designated legislative member may authorize travel. Requests must contain the date, location, time, estimated expense, purpose and the benefit accruing from travel. Allowable travel includes:

- a. Attendance and fees for meetings, conferences, or workshops on topics directly related to prairies, wetlands, forests, and other habitats for fish, game, and wildlife habitat conservation
- b. Participation at an event that marks the acquisition, restoration, and/enhancement of projects funded with Outdoor Heritage Funds.
- c. Non-LSOHC sponsored tours of habitat sites.
- d. Tour a prospective project site to gain information helpful in the evaluation of a request for funding.

All events to which Council members attend must be, at a minimum, open to a wide variety of legislative branch members and staff who are responsible for Environment and Outdoor Heritage Fund recommendations and appropriations.

Members and staff attending non-LSOHC sponsored events must comply with MS 10A.071 CERTAIN GIFTS BY LOBBYISTS AND PRINCIPALS PROHIBITED. Guidance on how to comply is available in the Advisory Opinions issued by the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board at <http://www.cfbreport.state.mn.us/advisory/aoSelect.php?MainList=Gift+Ban>

All travel requests, must complete the authorization process 14 days prior to travel date. The member traveling, or a representative of multiple members, will submit a written summary of the learning experience to be shared with council members along with their expense report.

Out-of-State travel requires the concurrence of LCC policies.

Expense reports are to be submitted after authorized travel and will be reimbursed as follows:

- i. Legislative members follow the per diem guidelines of their respective bodies;
- ii. Citizen members receive per diem as provided in Minnesota Statutes 15.0575, subd. 3 and expenses as outlined in the Commissioner's Plan, Ch. 15 Expense Reimbursement (July 1, 2013-June 30, 2015);
- iii. Council staff will be reimbursed as outlined in the Commissioner's Plan, Ch. 15, Expense Reimbursement (July 1-June 30, 2015).