

Annual Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission

Proposed Minutes

Date: January 3, 2007

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Place: Conference Room D, Fillmore St. Complex

Present: Betty Gajewski, Russell V. Brown, Jr., Paul Geerlings, Bobbi Jones Sabine, Roger E. Jonas, Crystal Unema, Joyce Kortman, Mark Oppenhuizen and Phil Kuyers

Absent: Ted Bosgraaf

Staff: John A. Scholtz, Manager; Curt TerHaar, Coordinator of Park Planning & Development; Dave Mazurek, Park Operations Superintendent; and Diane L. Huhn, Parks Secretary

Guests: None

John Scholtz called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and called for nominations for 2007 Commission officers. Unema, representing the Nominating Committee, nominated the following slate of officers for 2007: President - Mark Oppenhuizen; Vice-President – Ted Bosgraaf; Secretary – Phil Kuyers. Scholtz called for additional nominations three consecutive times.

Subject: Election of President

PR 07-001 Motion: To close the nominations for President and cast a unanimous ballot in favor of Mark Oppenhuizen as President of the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission for 2007.

Moved by: Unema Supported by: Kortman Unanimous

Subject: Election of Vice-President

PR 07-002 Motion: To close the nominations for Vice-President and cast a unanimous ballot in favor of Ted Bosgraaf as Vice-President of the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission for 2007.

Moved by: Unema Supported by: Kuyers Unanimous

Subject: Election of Secretary

PR 07-003 Motion: To close the nominations for Secretary and cast a unanimous ballot in favor of Phil Kuyers as Secretary of the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission for 2007.
Moved by: Unema Supported by: Kortman Unanimous

Subject: Approval of Minutes

PR 07-004 Motion: To approve the minutes of the Commission's December 6, 2006 regular meeting.
Moved by: Brown Supported by: Kortman Unanimous

Subject: Park 12 Advisory Council

PR 07-005 Motion: To approve the Finance and Personnel Committee's recommendation of Terry L. "Skip" Nagelvoort to fill the opening on the Park 12 Advisory Council.
Moved by: Kuyers Supported by: Geerlings Unanimous

Subject: Park 12 Pumphouse Study

PR 07-006 Motion: To approve the bid from consultant Soils and Structures to conduct a structural evaluation of the pumphouse at Park 12.
Moved by: Geerlings Supported by: Sabine Unanimous

Subject: Go Into Closed Session

PR 07-007 Motion: To go into Closed Session to discuss property matters.
Moved by: Kuyers Supported by: Unema Unanimous

Subject: To Rise From Closed Session

PR 07-008 Motion: To rise from Closed Session.
Moved by: Geerlings Supported by: Unema Unanimous

Other Items Discussed:

Commission members received two letters dated December 7, 2006 from DNR Director Rebecca Humphries relative to the Trust Fund recommendation to award grants for both

the Bur Oak Landing Acquisition Project and the Mt. Pisgah Dune Protection Project. Everyone was pleased with the grant success.

Commission members reviewed the December 20 letter from Sheriff Gary Rosema relative to the SWAP Program funding. The cost will gradually go up over the next year to make the program more self sufficient. Scholtz explained that the Parks Commission has been unable to obtain all of the SWAP crew time it has budgeted over the past year because there simply are not enough crews available. We are waiting on an official response from the Sheriff's Department as to whether additional crew time will be available in 2007. If not, other options should be explored to provide labor for key projects including invasive species control. Scholtz indicated he would try to find out by the February meeting whether additional SWAP time will be available.

Scholtz summarized programs which will be featured at the upcoming MRPA conference in Grand Rapids. He encouraged Parks Commission members to notify him if interested in attending all or a portion of the conference.

Commission members reviewed comment cards received since the previous meeting.

Commission members reviewed an e-mail from Robert Vanderkamp dated December 31, 2006 expressing opposition to horses at the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area. He explained that illegal horse use last year did significant damage to the trails which made walking difficult. Brown commented that we need to consider the needs of all citizens in the county and not cater to just one group. Scholtz indicated he hoped to have a recommendation for the Commission at the February meeting.

Commission members reviewed the report of Parks and Recreation Commission expenditures through November 30, 2006

President Oppenhuizen requested Scholtz comment on his Director's report. Scholtz explained that a decision was made to delay the implementation of the web based on-line reservation system. There are still some significant bugs to be worked before going live in a few weeks.

Scholtz next commented on an anticipated presentation from Georgetown Township dog supporters at the February Commission meeting to request the Parks Commission establish a dog park at the Fillmore-at-the-Bend Open Space. Unema questioned who would actually run the facility. Kortman suggested Georgetown Township operate the facility – based on the precedent established by Park Township in running a dog park in their area. Gajewski suggested the Parks Commission consider how a dog park fits with the mission of the Commission. Scholtz commented that there are a large number of regional parks agencies which do develop and operate dog parks as part of their core park program. However, Scholtz indicated he is not yet sure whether it would be a good fit within the Ottawa County park system. Most of the dog parks he has seen in county and regional park systems were located within a larger park and benefited from pre-existing infrastructure within that park. That would not be the case at the Fillmore-at-the-Bend

Open Space. Questions that should be answered include: How big a radius would a dog park serve? Would Ottawa County Parks need three or four dog parks to be consistent throughout the county? Geerlings noted that dam structures around the county have the potential to be fenced and used for public recreation purposes such as dog parks.

Scholtz indicated he has yet to request Board approval to name the second community room at Hager Park in honor of Andrew DeVries but intends to do so soon. He asked for an expression of support to make the request and Commission members were strongly supportive.

Scholtz reported an addition will be added to the Fillmore Street Complex within the next two years with planning underway for a new wing on the west side of the building. Preliminary plans show the county parks' office on the upper (second floor) level of the new addition with significantly larger office space.

Scholtz explained the deer management meeting with Dr. Timothy VanDeelen was well attended and very worthwhile. He gave a very informative "deer management 101" talk which was helpful in understanding the complex issues involved with controlling deer populations in Ottawa County. TerHaar noted that it was obvious from the talk that there are no quick fixes and no danger of exterminating deer. Geerlings suggested future county parks hunting permits require two does be taken before taking a buck. Sabine indicated she considers deer exclosures important to demonstrate the extent of deer impact to plant populations and sharp shooters are the preferred means of deer control. Unema noted that the City of Freemont is beginning a deer management program. Sabine suggested county parks consider fencing larger areas within parks to protect plant populations. Scholtz suggested that maybe the solution needs to involve a variety of hunting techniques, exclosures, etc. One idea would be to establish a goal for the number of deer to be removed, offer permitted hunts and monitor the number of deer taken, and then make up the difference with sharp shooters. Geerlings commented it is difficult to remove deer from residential areas since they know within twenty minutes that hunters are around and can easily vacate the hunting area. There was discussion relative to the merits of sport hunting versus use of sharp shooters and Unema noted that sharpshooters cost in the range of \$91 to \$260 per deer. All agreed we need to learn more and work toward a plan for deer management.

Mazurek reported on park operations during the month of December. He reported the Pigeon Creek Lodge was open early with some good skiing before the weather warmed up again. Trenching at North Ottawa Dunes to control oak wilt disease was successfully completed through the steep terrain and photos of the process used were passed around. Brown asked whether there are other reports of oak wilt in the county and Mazurek indicated he would not be the person with that knowledge. Brown also asked whether there was more oak wilt at North Ottawa Dunes and Mazurek responded that Chip Francke and our intern worked with state foresters to identify the diseased area, which was all on private land, and trenched a buffer between the diseased area and North Ottawa Dunes. We believe at this point the disease is contained but there is no way of knowing for sure.

Mazurek reported he has bid out all unwanted structures at Community Haven and all have been sold. The utility building near the barn was retained and is being renovated for maintenance use by the North Park Supervisor. Establishment of a north county satellite maintenance facility at Community Haven has been in the planning stages for some time.

Unema reported that the Friends Group is sponsoring “Winter at the Weaver House” on January 13. All are invited.

Mazurek reported that considerable progress has been made at the Riley Street property during the extended warm weather period. Much clean-up was completed as well as some sign work. Staff did notice considerable dog activity and dog waste on the trails. Changing use patterns to require leashes and clean-up will be a challenge. Oppenhuizen asked whether there is evidence of recent dumping at the site. Mazurek responded it is difficult to tell, but dumping could possibly be occurring on the east side where the structure was removed. “No Dumping” signs will be installed in this area. Kortman commented that taking down the old archery building and cleaning up that area made a big difference and it looks great!

Commission members reviewed the report of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting of December 15 and concurred with the choice of Terry Nagelvoort for the vacancy on the Park 12 Advisory Council.

TerHaar reported on the Planning Committee meeting of December 19, 2006. The group discussed the Riley Trails public meeting and TerHaar explained that most people at the meeting voiced the opinion that county parks should not make any changes to the site. Ironically, most people present also expressed support for the new lake and bridge. The input received is being considered and a second meeting is being planned for February at which time a preliminary plan will be presented.

TerHaar next reported that staff would like to proceed with an engineering study of the future greenway trail through the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area. He explained that the current project will build a short section of the trail but the proposed study would determine the route through the site from Byron Road down to Adams Street. A cost estimate would be provided and the study would also provide the basis for submitting a Transportation Enhancement grant to help fund the project. The goal would be to try to construct in 2008 when the township sponsored trail project is scheduled to be built linking the Upper Macatawa to Kent Trails. Scholtz explained that the study is not specifically budgeted in 2007 but that we have some general consulting funds in our Service Contracts line item that could be used. It is important we obtain the information to assist us with the grant application. Oppenhuizen asked whether the trail would then link to the White Pine Trail and staff responded that connecting to Kent Trails would provide this linkage.

TerHaar next provided project updates. In general, construction activity has been slow over the holidays. TerHaar explained that bids were received for the pumphouse

structural evaluation and he explained the details of each bid prior to Commission approval of the low bid by Soils and Structures.

Scholtz reported on the status of red pine management. He explained that he and Francke have been meeting with our consulting foresters to prepare to bid timber removal at Robinson Forest and Hiawatha Forest. Park staff recommends limiting timber removal to the time period of November 1 through April 1 to limit impact on vegetation and wildlife. This means we need to move quickly to approve bids and get the loggers working if we hope to complete these sites yet this winter. Scholtz explained the details of the timber management proposed for each site. Scholtz also explained public relations efforts which are planned including letters to all adjoining landowners, press releases to area news media, and postings at the kiosks for each Open Space land. Gajewski explained that the Bass River Recreation Area has diseased pines on its land and Scholtz said he would alert them to the county's plans for timber removal so they can add their land if desired.

Scholtz also reported that he recently presented the plans for timber removal to the Board's Finance and Personnel Committee and requested the revenues be retained within the parks fund. Kuyers explained that the Board members will likely support a 50-50 split between county parks and the general fund. Kortman suggested the nature center not be promoted as the parks project to be funded since not all county commissioners are on board with the idea at this point. Scholtz asked whether there should be discussion of the value of the nature center project in light of Kortman's comment. Kortman indicated it is primarily a matter of selling the Board on use of the funds and picking a specific project is not the best way to convince the Board that the Parks Commission should keep the timber revenues. Following further discussion, a decision was made to bid out the timber removal through the foresters and then take the bids through the Board's emergency contract process for approval. This would enable the logging to commence in late January rather than waiting until mid to late February to obtain all necessary approvals through the regular process.

The Parks Commission next went into Closed Session to discuss property matters.

Meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.