

**Regular Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission**

*Proposed Minutes*

- Date:** August 1, 2007
- Time:** 4:00 p.m.
- Place:** Fillmore Complex, Conference Room D
- Present:** Russ Brown, Betty Gajewski, Joyce Kortman, Phil Kuyers, Ted Bosgraaf, Crystal Unema, Bobbi Jones Sabine, Roger Jonas and Paul Geerlings.
- Absent:** Mark Oppenhuizen
- Staff:** John Scholtz, Director; Curt TerHaar, Coordinator of Park Planning and Development; Sherry Costello, Administrative Clerk; Dave Mazurek, Park Operations Superintendent; Leif VanHorsen, Parks Supervisor; and Carla Hill, Intern.
- Guests:** Jeff Cunningham (Advance Newspapers), Jeremy Gonsior (Holland Sentinel), and Joyce Smith.

**Subject: Approval of Minutes**

- PR 07-56    Motion:        To approve the minutes of the Commission's June 27, 2007 regular meeting.
- Moved by:    Brown            Supported by: Kortman        Unanimous

**Subject: Green Infrastructure Leadership Council**

- PR 07-57    Motion:        To approve membership in the West Michigan Strategic Alliance Green Infrastructure Leadership Council as a Leadership Partner.
- Moved by:    Kortman        Supported by: Brown        Unanimous

**Subject: Upper Macatawa Conservation Easement**

PR 07-58      Motion:            To authorize granting a Conservation Easement to the Land Conservancy of West Michigan for properties in the Upper Macatawa Natural Area as required to match the Department of Environmental Quality Clean Michigan Initiative grant and approve a \$5,000 payment to the Land Conservancy for monitoring.  
Moved by:      Kortman            Supported by: Geerlings      Unanimous

**Subject: Naming Upper Macatawa Conservation Area**

PR 07-59      Motion:            To re-name the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area as the Upper Macatawa Natural Area.  
Moved by:      Sabine              Supported by: Unema            Unanimous

**Subject: Timber Sales Bids**

PR 07-60      Motion:            To accept the timber sale bid from Rothig Forest Products for logging at Port Sheldon Natural Area and VanBuren Street Dunes and forward to the Board of Commissioners.  
Moved by:      Geerlings              Supported by: Jonas      Unanimous

**Subject: Community Haven Master Plan**

PR 07-61      Motion:            To approve the Community Haven Conceptual Master Plan concept as presented.  
Moved by:      Jonas                  Supported by: Brown            Unanimous

**Subject: 2007 Archery Hunting Program**

PR 07-62      Motion:            To approve increasing the number of archery hunting permits awarded each hunting period from 12 to 15 (two hunting periods per season at each site), at Crockery Creek and Upper Macatawa Natural Area.  
Moved by:      Jonas                  Supported by: Kortman            Unanimous

**Subject: Go Into Closed Session**

PR 07-63      Motion:            To go into Closed Session to discuss property matters.  
Moved by:      Brown            Supported by: Kuyers  
Yeas:            Gajewski, Kortman, Kuyers, Geerlings, Bosgraaf, Unema,  
Sabine, Jonas, Brown.  
Nays:            None            Motion passed 9 to 0.

**Subject: To Rise From Closed Session**

PR 07-64      Motion:            To rise from Closed Session.  
Moved by:      Geerlings       Supported by: Kuyers       Unanimous

**Other Items Discussed:**

Commission members received the July 14, 2007 letter from the West Michigan Green Infrastructure Project Manager requesting application for participation in a regional green infrastructure group. Scholtz stated that there is value to being a part of this organization. Jonas added that Ottawa County is a “keystone” of the seven counties involved and Kortman supported the membership. Action was taken by motion to join the West Michigan Strategic Alliance Green Infrastructure Leadership Council as a Leadership Partner.

Bosgraaf called for discussion in response to the comment cards received since the previous meeting. Mazurek started with a response in reference to a Tunnel Park comment card indicating that the changing rooms were locked during a recent visit. He stated that the changing rooms have been kept locked on slower weekdays to reduce maintenance costs. He added that the changing rooms have posted open hours by signs and the restrooms have plenty of space for changing. He will monitor for future consideration.

Mazurek responded to a comment card requesting better access to the waterfront area at Grose Park for handicapped individuals. Scholtz added that the staff has gone to great extent to make the park barrier free. Mazurek will explore the request further to determine the feasibility of assisting the park user.

Kuyers questioned the email comment from a park user indicating that there had been an unleashed dog at Rosy Mound. Mazurek stated that staff continues to watch for these incidents but often users know when staff is not present and bring dogs there even though signs are clearly posted.

Unema expressed her appreciation for the nice email comment from Jeff Larabel regarding the Fillmore at the Bend area. He gave the Parks a “big thanks” for the work that has been done there.

Mazurek addressed the email question from a user requesting the horse trails be open in the winter at Pigeon Creek Park. He explained the popularity of the ski trails at Pigeon Creek Park and advised against expanding the season for equestrian trails. Brown questioned if the staff responds to email comments and concerns. Scholtz answered that Park staff does respond accordingly.

Mazurek responded to a email comment from a Grose Park user indicating that the restrooms were not kept up properly. Mazurek stated that Anne Engvall, the Park Supervisor, has posted the comment card for staff to see and staff is responding accordingly. Stinebower has done several spot checks and the restrooms have been in proper order.

Bosgraaf called for public comment and Mr. Jeremy Gonsior introduced himself from the Holland Sentinel and Ms. Joyce Smith, a land owner of Park 12, greeted the Commission.

Commission members reviewed the report of Parks and Recreation expenditures through June 30, 2007.

Commission members reviewed the Long-Range Budget Projection. Scholtz stated that it has been updated to reflect the Stewardship Work Crew and feels the plan is on track. Brown questioned the possible loss of funds from the County General Fund budget and Kuyers stated that he felt there would be a year to adjust if that were the case. Brown indicated he would like to see a scenario with the possible loss of funds removed. Bosgraaf stated that the Commission should review the budget projection over the next month.

Scholtz commented on various items included in his Director's Report. He stated the Swap program has had a wage increase from \$4.00 to \$5.00 this year and is increasing to \$5.68 for 2008. He commented that this is a great program, however, we need to be aware of the cost and assess the true value of the program in light of alternatives.

Scholtz continued with the Park 12 encroachment listing and Kortman expressed that she would like to see an encroachment list without any categorization. Scholtz explained a request from Mr. Wood to remove a small dune feature allowing him the ability to have vehicle access to his property from Auburn Avenue. Brown asked if Auburn Avenue was plowed in the winter, Mr. Wood had indicated that this street was not. Bosgraaf indicated that it is plowed during the winter months just like any other side street in the area.

Scholtz moved on to the Park User Survey stating that it has been completed and a preliminary report should be ready by the September Commission meeting.

Mazurek submitted his Superintendent's Report and gave updates on the motor vehicle fees. He stated that staff has tried to get a jump on the Poison Hemlock plant this season and will be putting a plan together for further control next year. Mazurek introduced two Park staff members Leif VanHorssen, Park Supervisor and Carla Hill, Intern to report on

Garlic Mustard control in 2007. They summarized control efforts for this invasive plant including the number of bags removed from each site.

Brown inquired about the fencing at Hager Park and Scholtz stated that staff has not yet completed its review and he would get an answer for him soon.

Mazurek submitted Stinebower's report for review and asked if there were any questions.

Commission received the Planning Committee report of July 13, 2007 for questions. Bosgraaf will schedule a meeting for the Planning Committee on August 9, 2007 at 10 a.m. to discuss Park 12 encroachment items and then submit the list to the WMPA as soon as possible.

Bosgraaf called on Scholtz to comment on the Park 12 Advisory Council meeting of July 25, 2007. Scholtz summarized the meeting and indicated that our attorney is working with the Road Commission's attorney to review the paper road ROW's and he hopes to have a legal opinion by the next meeting as to the need to allow road construction on these ROW's.

Bosgraaf called for updates on Old Business. TerHaar submitted a hand out for Commission review on the Upper Macatawa Restoration Phase II project. He stated that the project is right on budget and the size of the project has been doubled due to the unexpectedly low bid prices. He continued to explain that the south side is now complete and approval for the north expansion was given two days ago and needs to be completed by the end of August. Scholtz stated that a conservation easement will be necessary in order to qualify for grant match dollars for the roughly 87 acres acquired during the grant period. Scholtz requested permission to grant the Land Conservancy an easement in order to obtain grant match dollars. Action was taken by motion to grant a conservation easement to the Land Conservancy and the matter will be forwarded to the full Board.

Scholtz then discussed the naming of the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area property and stated that the Public Relations committee seemed to be in agreement to call it a "natural area". Sabine agreed and explained the Committee's rationale. Scholtz stated that with program activities starting there in the fall a name should be decided upon so signage could be installed. Action was taken by motion to re-name the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area as the Upper Macatawa Natural Area.

TerHaar continued with facility construction updates, stating that MDOT is nearing completion and he will be visiting there tomorrow morning for a walk through.

Discussion continued with the Park 12 bike path with Scholtz stating that one member of the Advisory Council felt that there were dangerous aspects to the path. Mazurek is looking into signage and TerHaar will be evaluating re-installing a connection between the road shoulder and the bike path. Scholtz stated that Park Township will split the cost of the connection.

Commission received the draft list of Park 12 encroachments. The time line was reviewed once again and it was noted that the draft list should remain a draft until the October meeting. The list will go to the Planning Committee next week for review, then on to the WMPA and cottagers to review. Public comment would be received at the December meeting and there would also be a possible special public meeting for input. Brown questioned the ability to deed property to resolve encroachments and Geerlings noted that essentially a license to encroach will remain for the life of the property. Scholtz commented that ultimately the Commission will need separate agreements with each land owner who has an encroachment.

Scholtz continued with the Nature Center update and stated that Oppenhuizen sent it out for costing and it came back at \$1.38 million. The budget is set for \$1.5 million which seems to be on track. Scholtz also stated that fund-raising needs to begin soon. Scholtz invited Commission members to participate in a strategy session and encouraged them to call him if they wanted to be included. He also commented that the process will likely start off with a feasibility study. Bosgraaf expressed concern in doing a fundraiser right after the millage. Scholtz stated that approximately \$550,000 is needed and he referenced the North Ottawa Dunes fundraising project as a comparable project. Kortman suggested that the Friends be invited to the strategy session.

Commission received bids and the proposed contract for timber sales at the Port Sheldon Natural Area and VanBuren Street Dunes. Scholtz stated that the winning bid is the same contractor that we are currently using and they have done a nice job. Action was taken by motion to accept the bid from Rothig Forest Products.

A brief discussion regarding the Community Haven Master Plan concept took place and Action was taken by motion to approve the plan.

Scholtz presented the archery hunter survey responses for the 2006 season at Crockery Creek and Upper Macatawa Conservation Area. Discussion continued with the number of permits to allow and the length of season. Kuyers suggested that hunters receiving a permit and then not using it should be penalized by not being able to re-apply for one year. Scholtz recommended increasing permits from 12 to 15 at both sites with two seasons each in response to the lower than expected number of hunters actually participating. Action was taken by motion to increase the number of permits to 15 at both the Upper Macatawa Natural Area and Crockery Creek.

Bosgraaf called for public comment. Ms. Joyce Smith thanked the Commission and Parks staff for providing and disposing of Garlic Mustard bags at Park 12. Smith also mentioned that the WMPA has the responsibility of communicating with the Park 12 cottagers and she felt that this has not occurred in a satisfactory manner in the past. Smith hopes that the Commission can find alternate ways to communicate with the Park 12 cottagers other than through WMPA. Bosgraaf suggested reminding WMPA of their communication responsibilities.

Mrs. Carla Hill, an intern for the Parks, notified the Commission that her internship would be over next week and thanked everyone for the opportunity to work with staff and the Commission.

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.