

Regular Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission

Approved Minutes

- Date:** December 3, 2008
- Time:** 3:00 p.m.
- Place:** Weaver House, Pine Bend Park
- Present:** Bobbi Jones Sabine, Joyce Kortman, Roger Jonas, Paul Geerlings, Ray Statema, Jim Miedema, Russell Brown, Crystal Unema and Phil Kuyers
- Absent:** Ted Bosgraaf
- Staff:** John Scholtz, Director; Curt TerHaar, Coordinator of Park Planning and Development; Sherry Costello, Administrative Clerk; and Dave Mazurek, Park Operations Superintendent
- Guests:** Grant Jones, Dave Lind and Joyce Smith

Subject: Approval of Minutes

- PR 08-081 Motion: To approve the minutes of the Commission's November 5, 2008 regular meeting.
- Moved by: Jonas Supported by: Unema Unanimous

Subject: DeVries Room Improvement Project

- PR 08-082 Motion: To authorize staff to proceed with the DeVries room improvement project and accept the best qualified bid within budget constraints.
- Moved by: Unema Supported by: Kortman Unanimous

Subject: Upper Macatawa Natural Area Non-Motorized Pathway Project

- PR 08-083 Motion: To authorize the proposed grant application to the Michigan Department of Transportation for Federal Transportation Enhancement Funds for the Upper Macatawa Natural Area Non-motorized pathway project.
- Moved by: Geerlings Supported by: Brown Unanimous

very clear criteria would need to be implemented for the use of the fund in order to protect it from raids during this difficult economy. Kortman agreed and also suggested not combining parks funds with general fund dollars as this may make it vulnerable by creating it as a “reserve” fund. She also suggested getting a legal opinion on how to have the funds designated in order to protect them.

Scholtz continued with the Musketawa Trail extension project and encouraged all Commission members to visit the Triick farm site in order to make the most informed decision. He suggested visiting the site during the next Planning Committee meeting and Kortman invited all Commission members to attend. Scholtz also mentioned the he and TerHaar have been looking into other trails that are located by cattle operations and are continuing research in that specific area. He stated that the master plan for the Musketawa Trail was approved in 1993 and the plan clearly shows proposed expansion of the trail to the east. TerHaar added that in his communications with the State of Michigan he has found that they are actively researching the potential impact of the trail on the cattle operation. The State has made this a high priority to link the Musketawa and White Pine trails together.

Scholtz then commented on the 2009 Board Parks tour and noted that a tentative date of May 12, 2009 was set but asked members to consider moving the date to June 23, 2009 as there were some other events and conflicts with the tentative date. Statema expressed his agreement with the June date as he would not be able to attend the May date. Consensus was reached by the Commission to move the date to June 23, 2009.

Scholtz moved on to the topic of a no-wake zone for the Pigeon River east of the Lakeshore Drive bridge. After a brief discussion consensus was reached to go ahead and communicate with Port Sheldon Township the Commission’s support for the idea.

Sabine then noted the deadline for Flipse to move his building is currently April 30, 2009 and asked for comments. Scholtz added that if the building was not removed by the deadline then Park staff would have it removed and seek the cost of removal through the appropriate courts. There was general consensus in agreement of the April date.

Sabine then moved on to the Park Operations Report. Mazurek requested in his report approval to bid the DeVries Room improvement project and authorization to accept the lowest qualified bid in order to meet the spring completion date. TerHaar also noted that the accepted bid would be completed by Purchase Order. Approval was passed by motion.

The Park Naturalist’s Report was received and no questions or comments were made.

Commission members received the Planning Committee meeting report and Sabine noted the Planning retreat is scheduled for February 18th from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Scholtz reported that this retreat will focus on long range planning and will include a facilitator.

Commission members next received the Finance & Personnel Committee meeting report and Scholtz reviewed the topics of the meeting. Among items discussed were 2009 fees and charges and the creation of a low income fee policy. Scholtz reported a motion was

supported and passed to recommend that 2009 fees and charges be maintained at 2008 levels in consideration of the difficult economic times. He then discussed that Committee members also agreed that a low income policy was a good idea and after some communication with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHH) it was discovered that all persons that qualify for assistance are given a participant card. This card could serve as qualification for a reduced fee or no fee. Kortman expressed her concern with giving free entrance and explained that any person wanting to visit our parks can “walk in” for free now, but she would support a reduced fee. She also suggested the possibility of completing an incentive type program to receive the pass. Jonas suggested using it as a discretionary tool by providing DHH or other specific agencies park passes to hand out to qualified users. Brown remarked that Ingham County’s program was too liberal and he would like to see the participant earn the park pass. Unema suggested giving the same discount as the senior pass. Sabine commented that the current price for a park pass is very reasonable but she be in favor of offering it at a reduced price to low income individuals. Mazurek expressed a concern that fee booth attendants should not have to undertake complicated review in assessing eligibility as this would hold up traffic. Scholtz will do more research and bring back a recommendation.

Sabine thanked Unema for serving as the Friends of Ottawa County Parks representative and asked for the Friends update. Unema reported that the Grand Lady will have another cruise next year. She reported that the Executive Board for the Friends group has done a fantastic job and serving has been a wonderful experience for her.

Sabine called for discussion of Old Business and TerHaar gave an update on current projects. He then discussed the Hager Park stream corridor and handed out a fence detail to show what type of fencing he is proposing in place of the wire fence that is currently in place. TerHaar explained that it would be approximately two to three more years before the fencing to the east can be removed. Scholtz expressed parks desire to try and change the use patterns of the visitors before the wire fencing is removed all together.

Scholtz gave an update on the Olive Shores acquisition project and reported that all of the appraisals have been completed and sent to the state. The Ottawa County Board of Commissioners approved the grant agreement and he is now in the process of sending that to the State.

Sabine called for New Business and received the proposed grant application to the Michigan Department of Transportation for Federal Transportation Enhancement Funds for the Upper Macatawa Natural Area Non-motorized Pathway project. Scholtz explained that the Ottawa County Road Commission is the pass thru agency for these funds. TerHaar reported that the cost of the project is proposed at \$1.37 million for construction and the match amount would be \$671,000. A motion was made and supported to authorize the grant application. Scholtz was directed to explore both the Road Commission and the Macatawa Area Coordination Council as project sponsors to the state.

Sabine asked for Commissioner comments and Brown expressed his desire to have Commission members consider making Riverside Park a more family oriented facility. He would like to see playground equipment and more grills.

Statema reported that he spoke with the Michigan Mountain Biking Association recently and they requested the Commission consider having mountain biking trails at the Aldrink property in the future. Scholtz commented that county parks has some trails open for mountain biking but he has always wanted to designate and design an area for mountain biking trails but a site has not yet been determined. The difficulty lies in finding a site with terrain desired by mountain bikers but without highly sensitive natural features.

Unema commended the Commission and staff members for all of their hard work and accomplishments over the years.

Meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m. and a reception for Unema and Brown followed.