

## FOCUS GROUP MEETING MINUTES - KITCHEL-LINDQUIST-HARTGER DUNES PRESERVE/MDNR STATE PARKS

PROJECT: **miOTTAWA  
SANDS PARK**

MEETING DATE: March 11, 2020

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A meeting was held at Ferrysburg City Hall to discuss Ottawa Sands County Park project. The following summarizes items discussed at the meeting.

1. Curt TerHaar with Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission (OCPRC) gave an introduction about Ottawa Sands County Park:
  - a) First property purchase was in 2018, and the second was in July of 2019.
  - b) OCPRC opened a trail system in the park which is currently open to the public, and now are deciding what to do with the land through a Master Plan process. This will be a year-long process and they are excited for this great opportunity. We will have a lot of opportunities to get public input.
  - c) This is the start of the process, where we talk with important stakeholders to identify what we need to talk about with the public.
  
2. VIRIDIS Design Group (VIRIDIS) is the design consultant that OCPRC has retained for the master plan process, through a Coastal Management Program grant. They communicated that in these focus group sessions, we will develop a framework of your thoughts such as concerns about development and connectivity. We will be gathering information and listening, and will use this to inform the master plan. Input is the most important priority for the master plan.
  - a) We will engage participants in an inclusive and open process; we need to know your points of view and what's important to you, since this is your community.
  - b) We will consider all points of view to create a plan that addresses environmental, cultural, and recreation resource needs to reclaim this former industrial site. This is a unique opportunity due to the park's location within the context of the coastal corridor.
  - c) We will look at this park through an ecological lens, studying ecology and geologic studies. Bill Martinus is doing a floristic study. Index is around 45; for reference, KLH Dunes Preserve is at 70.
  - d) We will incorporate low-impact, sustainable site development principles that will support proposed improvements and programming.
  - e) Proposed development shall be considered within the context of the entire coastal corridor and encourage long-term collaborative planning and land management. It is important to think of the sites as being connected.

- f) We will research the City of Ferrysburg and other local jurisdictions' plans and services, including the Tri-Cities Rec Plan, to ensure that we are not duplicating efforts.
3. Phase 1 of the Master Plan process begins with Analysis and Programming. VIRIDIS has a campground expert on their team to conduct a feasibility study if camping is desired at Ottawa Sands. OCPRC is also having natural features, herpetology and wetlands inventories completed.
  - a) This phase also includes the first public community input session, which will be held on site. The event is scheduled for June 13, 2020.
  - b) A photo vision challenge will also take place. This is a way to engage a larger group of people; potentially a younger demographic. Submitted photos will be displayed in Instagram, a photo sharing app. The photos may be of ways that the user enjoys using the park currently, ideas of things they'd like to do in the park, or examples of great parks/recreation that they've seen someplace else. The photos will be used throughout the design process, and printouts of the images will be used at the community input sessions. This will also help to give the community a sense of ownership in the process.
4. Phase 2 is for plan development. VIRIDIS will take the input received from phase 1 and begin to craft several concepts.
  - a) A second community input session will be held at a location off-site, to be determined, to display the concepts and get feedback. Input from each concept option will be recorded and used as a guide to help shape the preferred option that will be developed in phase 3.
5. Phase 3 will be plan finalization. VIRIDIS will prepare cost estimates and a phasing plan. The final plan will be revealed at an open house at the end of November and go to the Parks Commission for approval at the end of December.
6. Fred suggested having the KLH Dunes Preserve mission statement strongly influence this process: To operate, maintain, and safeguard forever the Kitchel-Lindquist-Hartger Dunes Preserve in its natural state for scientific, educational, and aesthetic purposes. He also wanted to emphasize the importance of protecting sensitive dunes. He shared that Kitchel-Lindquist-Hartger (KLH) Dunes Preserve has an outdoor classroom with restrooms, which is a great resource.
7. VIRIDIS said north-south pedestrian connectivity had been identified in previous stakeholder meetings today. At KLH Dunes Preserve, they only allow hiking, and have trouble keeping people on the trail and not on the crest, which promotes erosion.
8. Fred said the KLH Dunes Preserve has some stairs and steps, but the trails are just earth and sand. He also expressed concern about movement of invasive seeds and plants. KLH Dunes Preserve is working with Melanie at OCPRC to mitigate invasives. He is enthused about the opportunity for connectivity with the Grand Haven open space and Ottawa Sands, and hopes that education about invasive species can be incorporated.
9. North Ottawa Dunes is a good example of keeping people on the path.

10. The North Shore Road construction project is adding a 5' paved shoulder on each side. This matches Ferrysburg's road section.
11. Pat said they only allow pedestrian use on the trails at PJ Hoffmaster State Park. They have earth trails, not paved, and a 300-site campground. They just added signage last year with mileage for their trail system. Curt suggested the idea of uniform signage throughout the coastal corridor.
12. Richard said a big concern they deal with at KLH Dunes Preserve is people browsing for firewood.
13. Mountain bikes are not allowed at KLH Dunes Preserve or PJ Hoffmaster State Park. They have a negative effect on the trails such as erosion and conflicts with other users.
14. Pat said they are working to educate visitors about habitat in the woods. He said they used to have a yearly deer hunt at the State Park but haven't done one for 4-5 years. Invasives are an issue, including Garlic Mustard. He said they had trouble with Oak wilt, but have treated the trees.
15. KLH Dunes Preserve has a mixed view from their board regarding deer; Fred said he feels there are too many and they ravage the dunes.
16. OCPRC said they hosted deer hunts for two weekends last fall at North Ottawa Dunes and Ottawa Sands. 40 deer were taken.
17. Fred expressed interest in coordinating efforts with invasives. He also said they currently have very little interpretive signage at KLH Dunes Preserve, but it could be advantageous for more signage to educate on erosion and invasives. VIRIDIS said signage could talk about resiliency of the shoreline. Curt added signage could share interesting community history.
18. Richard suggested other history: lumbering that happened, fishing with shanties and drying fish on the shore, and shipwrecks. He suggested contacting Jared at the Museum for more information.
19. Tim recommended using a GPS location on the signage to help from a safety standpoint, giving an example of a skier that was injured and took work from multiple agencies to locate.
20. Ideas for Ottawa Sands County Park:
  - a) Fred wants to see a campground, protection of the dunes, and educational opportunities. He also wanted to explore opportunities for classes at the KLH Dunes Preserve outdoor classroom.
  - b) Richard wants to see connectivity, camping and access to the Grand River mouth.
  - c) Pat said people want multi-day camping, this could be a good opportunity for that. He wants to complement the trail.
  - d) Tim said access to the campground in emergency situations would be vital as well as incorporating a fire hydrant for emergency crews.
  - e) The City of Grand Haven may want emergency crew ATV access to Dewey Hill. Tim suggested that the City could partner with Ottawa County for ATV fire access.

- f) Fred said any vehicle marks on the dunes takes years to heal.
- g) Tim mentioned a homeowner on North Shore Drive had runoff from Ottawa Sands in their backyard.

21. Community Engagement

- a) Beginning today, the team is holding a series of focus group meetings with local stakeholders.
- b) Photovision Challenge: on Instagram, park users can submit pictures of their use of Ottawa Sands County Park, things/recreation they'd like to see, or examples of other places/ideas that they like. This will be promoted with a sign at the park as well as on the OCPRC website. #miOttawaSands This is not framed as a contest at this time, but there may be some small incentives such as a park pass or small local coffee shop gift card.
- c) An online survey for the regional community to give input will be available.
- d) A series of community meetings will be held to gain input for the project:
  - i. Community Input #1 will be held on site with activities and food. The goal will be to understand what types of recreation the community wants to see at this park. 3-4 concepts will be developed based on the input collected and shared with stakeholders prior to the second input session.
  - ii. Community Input #2 will be held later in the summer to share the concepts and to get votes on the different ideas in them to be able to compile the input into a preferred concept. This will be held off-site and is anticipated to be open-house style.
  - iii. Community Input #3 will be held at the end of November off-site to present the preferred concept.
  - iv. Child care will be available at the open houses.
  - v. VIRIDIS said they've used color coding at public input events before to signify geographic location and to give hierarchy to near neighbors.
- e) Pat said he could post information about Ottawa Sands events at TJ Hoffmaster State Park and on their Facebook page.

22. The VIRIDIS team asked the participants to fill out the comment cards provided. Any other thoughts can be e-mailed to Curt TerHaar with OCPRC; the input received will help inform how we ask questions of the public.

Respectfully submitted,  
VIRIDIS Design Group

Enclosures: Hand-out packet  
Sign-In Sheet

OTTAWA SANDS COUNTY PARK

KITCHEL-LINDQUIST DUNES & MDNR STATE PARKS FOCUS GROUPS

SIGN-IN SHEET

03.11.2020

NAME	AFFILIATION	E-MAIL
Craig Bessinger	City of Ferrysburg	cbessinger@ferrysburg.org
Fred Bryant	Chairperson KLD Reserve	fbryant319@
RICHARD CARLSON	FERRYSBURG CITY COUNCIL	RCARLSONE@gmail.com FERRYSBURG.ORG
Rebecca Hopp	City of Ferrysburg	rhopp@ferrysburg.org
TIM O'DONNELL	CITY OF FERRYSBURG	todonnell@ferrysburg.org
Jason Shumblin	Ottawa Parks	Jshumblin@niotawaparks.org
Pat Waken	DNR-PRD - Algonquin S.P.	WakenP1@Michigan.gov