
GENESEE COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION MINUTES

The semi-monthly meeting of the Genesee County Parks & Recreation Commission was held on Thursday, March 12, 2009 in the Harris Auditorium of the Genesee County Administration Building, 1101 Beach St., Flint, 48502

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Lucas, Joe Krapohl, Jeff Wright, Mike Keeler, Ted Henry, Bob Ranger

MEMBERS ABSENT: James Pomeroy, Archie Bailey, Patrick Gleason, James Washington

STAFF PRESENT: Amy McMillan, Director; Ron Walker, Deputy Director; Leisa Gagne, Finance Officer; Deborah Wilkes, Secretary, Nancy Edwards, Recreation Program Specialist, Tyler Barto, Intern, Brian Barkey, Legal Counsel, Fred Riddle, Parks Maintenance.

OTHERS PRESENT: Joe Madore, Richfield Township Supervisor; Heidi Phaneuf & Derek Bradshaw, Genesee County Planning Commission; Shelli Stevens, Cole Justice, Therese Haiduk and Ashley Husebye, NCCC Americorp Service Volunteers.

(1) CALL TO ORDER

President Krapohl called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

(2) INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. McMillan introduced Fred Riddle, Park Maintenance employee who is coordinating the work of the volunteers from NCCC AmeriCorp. NCCC volunteers are working in our parks for approximately 6 weeks.

Mr. Riddle introduced four of the workers. Cole Justice explained the purpose of the NCCC workers. It is a 10-month service program in which teams of students, aged 18-24, are assigned to designated regions of the United States to work in areas of: un-met human needs, environmental, disaster relief and educational projects. The workers on the team assigned to Genesee County are from Connecticut, Texas, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Ms. McMillan said we are partnering with the Boys & Girls Club of Flint who are providing accommodations for the NCCC workers. This group is currently working on a trail project. They are saving us a tremendous amount of money on a trail project and providing us with the opportunity to remove dead trees, so from a safety perspective, it is a very important project. These projects will have a lasting impact on our community and we appreciate their contribution.

TRAIL PROJECTS

Heidi Phaneuf detailed projects the Planning Commission is working on, projects that are complete and projections of when projects are due for completion. Ms. Phaneuf passed out a map of non-motorized trails in Genesee County as well as anticipated future projects.

To summarize:

- Linden County Park is complete.
- Mott Lake extension, connecting Stepping Stone Falls to Bluegill Boat Launch: there is funding for this and it will be built in the next year or two.
- Design plans are in the works for downtown Flint to Linden Rd., following the Flint River, passing by Atwood Stadium, Kettering University, connecting to McLaren Hospital with the goal of reaching all the way to Flushing.
- Applewood Trail has been built.
- Kearsley Park to Mott Community College has been completed with the grand opening scheduled for this spring.
- SAGE Coalition (Safe Active Genesee for Everyone), through the Crim Fitness Foundation, will provide new trail signage in the City of Flint, Flint River Trail as well as address some safety issues due to the age of the trail.
- Genesee Valley Trail from downtown Flint by Chevy in the Hole, to the Genesee Valley Mall (4.8 miles) engineering is complete. City of Flint railroad property is in the process of being acquired and they are confident this trail will be built. Genesee Valley Trail property has been acquired and funding may come from the stimulus program. The bridge on Corunna Rd will include the trail path and it is already figured into the design plans.

- Grand Traverse Greenway starts in downtown as well and funding has been approved and we are waiting for legislature to appropriate these funds sometime this year.

Downtown Flint is the core location where many of these trails connect to and becomes the focal point and that will be good for the City of Flint and the overall county.

Many of these projects have preliminary engineering complete and seeking funding dollars for construction is the next phase.

- M-15 Heritage Route has applied for funding connecting Davison areas: downtown to the community senior center and high school. It is a short trail but provides great linkage for that community and hopefully, one day it will extend south to Goodrich.
- The Trolley Line Trail will connect the Clio path to the county line to the north and also to Mt Morris. Funding was almost lost, but has been resurrected and the project will be completed.
- Engineering plans for the south trail from Mt Morris to Mott Lake area near Crossroads Village area is in the works. This is a very scenic pathway for the future. It will eventually connect to the path on Stanley and Genesee. Although engineering has been completed, funding has not been secured. Stimulus, state funding and other sources are being sought. When this is complete it will finish a north/south connection within the county. We hope that many of these projects will be funded through these sources.
- Southern Lakes Trailway from Otter Lake to Otisville is complete with another section leading to Millington are coming soon.

The trail system is still in its infancy in Genesee County but we look for it continuing to extend these projects in the future and the projects listed above are priorities. Community and citizen input was solicited to make sure the needs of the communities are met.

Ms. Phaneuf thanked the Genesee County Parks for being a wonderful partner in this process of trail development. The Planning Commission has relied on the expertise of Ron Walker and Amy McMillan and both have done a great job in helping to move projects forward.

Ms. McMillan said the Planning Commission has taken an important leadership role in developing the trail plans.

Commissioner Ranger said the Planning Commission is very diverse and touches just about everything in this county in some shape or form. It is amazing what business they take care of. It is a great staff.

Commissioner Krapohl said the trail in Otisville is a very beautiful and well-used trail and appreciated.

(3) OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION

No one from the public addressed the commission.

(4) CONSENT AGENDA

Discussion: There are no items to be removed from the consent agenda.

Action Taken:

Motion by Commissioner Lucas

Supported by Commissioner Ranger

Motion and support for approval of consent agenda items.

Roll Call:

Yeas: Wright, Ranger, Lucas, Krapohl, Keeler, Henry

Nays: None

Absent: Bailey, Pomeroy, Gleason, Washington

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6-0

(5) REPORT FROM LEGAL COUNSEL

Spencer Case: The Spencers filed a lawsuit against Kurtz Gravel claiming ownership of part of what the County claims in part of the Mounds. The County was allowed to intervene in this case to claim that it owns the property. There is a mechanism available when there is overwhelming facts on one side of the case and a decision can be made without having to hear testimony; a judge would listen to the facts and make a decision for one side to prevail. We are filing that motion claiming such is

the situation in this case. That motion will come up for hearing on April 22. No testimony will be presented and we've asked the judge to make a ruling.

(6) DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Five-Year Plan

Discussion: Staff would like the commission to authorize taking the 5-year plan to the Board of Commissioners on or before April 1, 2009. This is barring any substantial changes resulting from public input. This is mostly a scheduling issue because of when the 30-day window for the public ends and how our parks commission meeting schedule falls between the BOC meetings and the need to get it to the Board so they have time to place the plan on their agenda for adoption.

Action Taken:

Motion by Commissioner Henry

Supported by Commissioner Ranger

Motion and support to authorize staff to take the 5-year plan to the Board of Commissioners after the public review date has expired – on or before April 1, 2009 for final approval.

Vote by acclamation

Ayes: All ayes

Nays: None

Absent: Washington, Gleason, Pomeroy, Bailey

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6-0

B. Genesee County Fair Board Sub-Committee Meeting

Discussion: The sub-committee met with the Fair Board and we realize that it will be some time before we can come to a long-term agreement. The Fair Board is asking the Parks Commission to extend their current use agreement for one year for the E. A. Cummings Center until all the details of a long-term use agreement can be worked out. As you can expect there are many issues as it relates to funds on both ends. The current agreement ends in 2009. Staff is asking that the commission extend the current agreement, with all of the identical terms and conditions for one year to extend use of the E. A. Cummings Center for the Genesee County Fair in 2010. We'd like to have a long-term agreement by the end of this calendar year.

The Fair Board had previously purchased another piece of property where they intended to build their own facilities. Commissioner Wright said that the commission needs to realize that this is a real change of direction and position on the part of the Fair Board in that the Fair Board now wishes to pursue a long-term arrangement with the Parks. He believes, in the long run, it will benefit both the Fair Board and the Parks Board.

President Krapohl said that one issue they are trying to agree on is the term of the agreement. The sub-committee talked about a 25-year agreement. He asked if there was any direction the commission wanted to take or if any commissioner had any input on the term of the agreement. No commissioner expressed any problem with the concept of a 25-year agreement.

Commissioner Henry asked about the traffic and security at the Fair. He wants everybody to know that he is very much in favor of the Fair, but they had some real problems with traffic control and security last year. Ms. McMillan said we don't have sufficient staff to cover the Fair and the Parks. We have received an informal request to assign a couple rangers to assist with patrolling the camping area during the Fair. With sufficient notice we believe can make that happen and the Fair Board would reimburse us for the cost associated with that coverage. Commissioner Henry asked about the traffic control and parking and who is responsible. Ms. McMillan said the Fair Board needs to address this issue and that it takes people and experience to properly control traffic and parking. We deal with similar traffic configurations and parking at Crossroads and would be happy to provide technical assistance to the Fair Board on traffic control and parking issues.

Commissioner Wright clarified that he also sits on the Fair Board, but the Parks Commission board is the official body that he sits on by statute and the parks board is his first priority, position-wise. He feels the meeting was productive last week and all parties want to move forward. He believes it will take a couple years to work out all the ideas and issues that were proposed. There are several

capital improvement issues that need to be worked out. It will be a work-in-progress and we shouldn't expect a fix-all agreement in a couple months.

President Krapohl said that there is a desire on the part of the parks staff to help the Fair Board with technical advice and marketing support to help increase attendance to help make the Fair successful during these struggling times.

Action Taken:

Motion by Commissioner Wright
Supported by Commissioner Ranger

Motion and support to authorize extension of the present use agreement under the same terms and conditions with the Genesee County Agricultural Society for use of the E. A. Cummings Center for the Genesee County Fair activities for one year.

Vote by acclamation

Ayes: All ayes

Nays: None

Absent: Washington, Gleason, Pomeroy, Bailey

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6-0

C. Bow/Spear Fishing on Mott Lake

Discussion: Last year, at the request of park users, we presented the commission with a pilot program to permit bow/spear fishing on Mott Lake. We have had no concerns arise as a result of this pilot program and are requesting that the parks' commissioners approve extension of bow/spear fishing on Mott Lake with the same terms and conditions for another year.

Action Taken:

Motion by Commissioner Ranger
Supported by Commissioner Wright

Motion and support to authorize bow/spear fishing on Mott Lake for one year through the 2009 fishing season.

Voted on by acclamation

Ayes: All ayes

Nays: None

Absent: Washington, Gleason, Pomeroy, Bailey

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6-0

C. Full Time Staff Position

Discussion: The interest income from our investments is dramatically down. Barring a significant upturn of the economy we will be facing a significant budget shortfall. We are doing our best to prepare for the shortfalls. As a short-term fix for this budget year and possibly into the next budget year, staff is recommending that the full-time position vacated by recent retiree Priscilla Slackta remain vacant. Because she was in a position that was an income-generating position as well as technical, with regard to maintaining our reservation system both on-line and on the phone, staff is requesting that her work be spread amongst five seasonal employees. Staff is asking the commission to approve \$1 (for the phone and clerical duties) and \$2 per hour (for the technical and data duties) to the staff responsible for additional duties. This would cover the main duties of the job and still save us approximately \$40,000. Our original intent was to retain a full time position, it is an important position and we wanted to retain the full time position, but the best case scenario is that if we did fill it this year we would be put in a position of having to cut a position next year, either in this position, or elsewhere in the Parks. Our budget specifically permits us to make changes to our seasonal salaries and job descriptions but we wanted to bring this to our parks commission for any concerns or questions they may have.

Commissioner Henry asked who would be coordinating their work. Ms. McMillan said that Leisa Gagne, Hilda McShane and Deborah Wilkes would coordinate the work flow of these seasonal employees.

Commissioner Ranger stated that although he doesn't like to see the loss of a full-time position he realizes that we have to be realistic and do what we have to do. He is happy to see that when we are increasing the workload of these employees they are being compensated for the extra work.

Commissioner Henry agreed with Mr. Ranger, and added that we have to maintain a level of service. There is still a job to do.

President Krapohl said that the staff has been proactive to maintain as many full-time positions and hopefully in the future there will be funds to fill the vacancy.

Ms McMillan thanked the full-time staff for helping to come to this recommendation and the seasonal staff for stepping up to the plate to help as needed.

Action Taken:

Motion by Commissioner Henry

Supported by Commissioner Ranger

Motion and support to implement the recommendation of staff with regard to the temporary coverage for the vacant full-time position of reservation secretary.

Voted on by acclamation

Ayes: All ayes

Nays: None

Absent: Washington, Gleason, Pomeroy, Bailey

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 6-0

D. Road Closures: We are experiencing the typical spring thaw issues and there is a continuing ebb and flow of road closures. Typically the roads are closed in Elba, Richfield Park and Zemmer Park. As conditions improve, announcements will be made when the roads are re-opened. Also, as parking lot conditions improve, Stepping Stone Falls' gates will open for both motor and non-motorized traffic.

E. Cost Cutting Updates: There is information in your packet to update and inform the commission of the measures and progress made by staff so far.

F. Partnership Agreements: We are making good progress on partnership agreements, with the majority of the agreements already finalized and signed.

G. Annual Volunteer Dinner: You don't want to miss this event on April 21. All of our volunteers are invited including Crossroads Village, Fishing Derby helpers, For-Mar gardeners, Adopt-A-Park partners and all those who give of their time and energy and effort to the Genesee County Parks. Please let Debbie know if you plan on attending and we'll see that you have a seat because it was a standing room only event last year. President Krapohl said that it's nice to have as many commissioners there as possible to recognize volunteers and pass out the awards.

(7) OTHER BUSINESS

President Krapohl appointed Shorty Gleason to our parks executive board.

(8) OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMISSIONERS TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Ranger personally thanked the NCCC AmeriCorp volunteers for the work they are doing. He had never heard of the program before, but now that they are in our area he's heard about the program and workers on the television and radio and what they are doing all over the nation.

(9) OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COMMISSION

Joe Madore asked about the Richfield Park road closures. Ms. McMillan clarified that it was inside the boundaries of Richfield Park. He also asked about the local governing units being involved in the administration of the wildlife management program.

(10) ADJOURNMENT

With no objections made, President Krapohl adjourned the meeting at 11:03 a.m.