



Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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December 2, 2008

Human Services Building

Spartan Conference Room

8:30am

Minutes of a Scheduled meeting of the Allegan County Parks and Recreation Commission

A scheduled meeting of the Allegan County Parks and Recreation Commission was called to order by the Chair Bruce Culver on Tuesday, December 2, 2008 at 8:35am in the Spartan Conference Room in the lower level of the Human Services Building, 3255 122nd Ave, Suite 102, Allegan, Michigan.

Roll Call showed the following members:

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| PRESENT: | Mark DeYoung | Bruce Culver |
| | Larry Rasmussen | Becky Rininger |
| | Fritz Spreitzer | Robert Kaarlie |
| | Kelle Tobolic | Chuck Pullen |

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| EXCUSED ABSENT: | Marylne Langeance |
| | Georgina Rozeboom-Doster |

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| Also Present: | Kevin Ricco, Parks Director |
| | Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk |

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Kevin had two items to add to the agenda. Under UNFINISHED BUSINESS 8a. Update on Bysterveld Park; and under NEW BUSINESS 9a. Gun Lake Park Special Permit Request to Hold 2009 Gun Lake Winterfest.

A motion was made by Becky Rininger, seconded by Chuck Pullen to accept the additions of 8a and 9a and to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed by all present.

PRESENTATIONS OF LITTLEJOHN AND SILVER CREEK MASTER PLANS

Prior to introducing the representative from M.C. Smith, Bruce informed the Parks Commission and the public attendees that the Littlejohn Lake Master Plan would be presented first with the Silver Creek Master Plan to follow. He also asked the group, due to time constraints and fairness to all present, that comments be limited to three minutes each with the opportunity for questions to follow. Kevin distributed to the Parks Commission members an email letter he had received this morning from Cindi Van Nostrand, a Silver Creek Park user who was unable to attend the meeting due to illness.

The Littlejohn Lake Master Plan presentation began with an overview of the proposed changes that had been discussed during the September meeting. M.C. Smith's representative, Debbie Jensen, pointed out that one of the main changes was to relocate the park entrance to make it easier and safer for arrivals. Other key changes mentioned were the additions of an enclosed dog park, a tot play area that would be located close to the beach, and also two separate ramps on the beach; a barrier-free ramp making access to the water possible for those who are handicapped, and the other for kayaks and canoes. Ms. Jensen reiterated that during the first presentation, a safety concern was raised about the location of a proposed fishing pier and its proximity to the swimmers and informed the group it has since been moved further up the beach. She also went over the improvements and additions to the pathways throughout the park, linking some that are already existing. The picnic shelter will be expanded and improved upon, while a second one will be added to the park. Upgrades are also proposed for the maintenance building and day parking area. Twenty-five rustic equestrian campsites and twenty non-equestrian campsites with electric hook-up are intended. The primary revision in this area from the previous presentation is the manure pit has been moved closer to the equestrian area for convenience.

Bruce opened the floor to the public for comments and questions and received an instantaneous response of "I think it looks awesome! Everything looks like great improvements!" Another individual asked about the day parking area and if it will be more accessible and user friendly for tying up horses and was assured this factor would be accommodated. A question was posed about the number of trees that would be eliminated to make way for the campsites. Although the state requires a certain amount of trees be removed, Bruce stated it would be minimal and made clear that we want to keep as many trees as possible. Someone inquired when equestrians could start using the trails and Kevin replied that the trails have been years in the making. A lot of leg work has already been completed, and once the lease is finalized through the DNR, we could probably start using portions of the trails during the interim before the trails are completed.

Bruce gave the Parks Commission an opportunity to make comments. Kevin was pleased that M.C. Smith was able to incorporate the change requests from the last meeting and expressed his approval for the overall plan and how it will make better use of the park for generations to come.

A motion was made by Bob Kaarlie, seconded by Fritz Spreitzer, to approve the Littlejohn Lake Master Plan as presented. The motion passed by all present.

Debbie Jensen began the Silver Creek Park Master Plan presentation by commenting on the great job Kevin did of explaining the reasons behind the plan in general. She explained there have not been many changes made to the plan since the last presentation. Due to the importance of safety considerations the single entrance remains, along with the added 'loops' to the roadways to provide easier access for people coming in and out of the park. The campsites still follow the roadways...they just want to spread out the existing sites and propose some with electric hookup. Water points are conveniently located throughout the park and another manure pit for convenience has been added. M.C. Smith is still working on the layout for parking in the day use area using the concerns raised during the last presentation as a guide. The trail system stays intact with only some minor improvements proposed, and the sanitation station has also been left in the plan for environmental and sanitation reasons. New vault toilets will replace the existing ones with only one modern restroom area and an additional picnic area for the day users remain. Ms. Jensen stated the original plan showed hitching posts behind the trailers but they have been moved and adjusted to fit the sites and needs of the horse owners. She ended the presentation giving details of another improvement; they have now linked the North Trail to both Pine Trail and Creek View/West Boundary Trail to separate horses from the roadway on 134th Street.

The first question posed by an observer in attendance was if the traffic had been taken into consideration by having only one main entrance along 38th Street; she felt people may increase parking on the street beyond the entrance. Kevin asked if that has been a problem in the past because if that were the case, that would be an issue for the sheriff's department. Bruce interjected the Road Commission is responsible for getting 'No Parking' signs in place and the police could then enforce them. Kevin asked the Silver Creek Park Manager, Kris Allred, if parking along the roadway had been a problem in the past. Kris stated folks have never been

able to park along 134th Street because of the hill, but there were three or four events this year where people parked on 38th Street. Another individual asked where people should park if there is an event and all of the parking inside the park has been taken? Kevin stated the event coordinator is responsible for obtaining a Special Use Permit from the Road Commission to get permission to allow parking along the roadway.

Kevin was asked why only some of the campsites are proposed to receive the convenience of electric hookup and not all of them. Kevin explained that there are many people who do not want to use electricity and would prefer some sites to remain rustic. The gentleman remarked that once people see the convenience, they will want the electric too and asked if there would be an opportunity down the road to add electric if there became a greater demand for it. Kevin answered yes; if the need is there we could later accommodate more sites with electricity. A woman interjected that she was for the electric until she heard that Littlejohn Lake was going equestrian and then her opinion was swayed back to no electricity at Silver Creek; she felt that Littlejohn should be made modern and to leave Silver Creek as it is. Bruce reiterated that on the survey results, about half wanted electric at Silver Creek and the other half did not. Others were concerned about the park being classified modern if running water were to be put in, while others made their disapproval of the sanitation station known and wondered how it would be paid for. Again, Kevin brought to attention the results of the survey and how the plan would accommodate everyone, and explained the dumping station is not high maintenance once it is in place. He was asked if it would be possible to do another survey and Bruce replied that was not feasible; we have accomplished a lot of good changes and M.C. Smith has done a great job in satisfying both sides.

The topic changed to what the priorities would be for each phase and what would happen during the first phase. Kevin replied that would depend on how much funds were available through the DNR Trust Fund grant program and the County capital funds. More than likely, the first phase would include the roadways, the construction of one entrance, the improvements to the day ride area, installing the new vault toilets, and the hand-pumps if it is decided that running water is eliminated throughout the park. Someone commented the manure pits should be included in the first phase too, due to the current existing problem of people digging holes to dispose of the manure.

Bruce asked for the Park Commission's comments or questions and began by saying he and Kevin have discussed the option of eliminating the shower area and some electric sites, although they both feel it is important to leave the sanitation station in the plan. One member asked how close the spaces are together to park in the day use area, reminding everyone of the concerns of them being too close during the last presentation. Kevin stated that the day ride parking areas show on the map are simply open areas with no parking lines. Thus, users will be able to use the space as needed. There has also been mention of the possibility of a pull-through parking area and once we come to that step in the process, we can always reconsider our options.

Fritz commented he did not understand why there are people who are opposed to the sanitation station and an audience participant replied that it would cost too much to install and they did not want the camping fees to increase. Kevin reiterated that the initial costs to have it constructed would be covered by State grants and County capital funds and once done, it would not cost much to maintain nor would there be a charge to those who use it. He cannot say what the park user fees will be in the future and again stated that the fees would eventually increase due to inflation whether anything was ever done to the park or not; it all depends on future costs of running and maintaining the park.

Bob voiced his approval for the master plans of both parks saying there are many people with different expectations who want to use them, and we have done our best to satisfy them all. Mark asked if there was something other than boulders that could be used to mark off the campsites, and if there was not a real issue, why do we need anything in place at all? Kris stated that there is no issue of how people park their rigs and have enough intelligence to know where they should be.

Bruce asked if the Commission was ready to make a motion or would like more time regarding the Silver Creek Master Plan and Chuck suggested the motion to approve should be tabled until further review and discussion. A motion was made by Larry Rasmussen, seconded by Robert Kaarlie, to table the motion for approval to the January Parks Commission meeting, pending further review and discussion. The motion passed with a five to two vote count as follows: Ayes 5; Nays 2; Absent 2; Abstaining 0. Bruce closed the public meeting from further discussion.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MINUTES

A motion was made by Robert Kaarlie, seconded by Larry Rasmussen, to approve the minutes from November 4, 2008 as printed and mailed. Motion carried by all present.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Kevin reported that the issues regarding the financial statements that were in question in October and November have been resolved, although they are not showing yet since the report was run on December 1 prior to his conversation with David Vanderovaart in Finance. He was able to get everything sorted out and the adjustments have been corrected for the three line items that were in question; 094, 097 and 093. Kevin also pulled the budget for 2009 and found two discrepancies which he will submit to have changed, but everything else came in all right for the rest of the budget. A motion was made by Becky Rininger, seconded by Larry Rasmussen, to approve the financial statements. Motion carried by all present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

See sign-in sheet for the names of the public participants in attendance for the Littlejohn Lake and Silver Creek Park Master Plan presentations.

A neighbor of Silver Creek Park, who stayed after the presentations were finished to observe the meeting, would like to ask the Parks Commission to work with the Road Commission to improve the road conditions near the Silver Creek Park entrance. She stated their condition was pretty bad and the maintenance and repairs are not happening. Bruce informed her she should take this issue to the Township Board which she stated she has already talked to them and has plans to approach others as well.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW RICHMOND BRIDGE PARK UPDATE – CONSTRUCTION, ELLEN’S PROPERTY

Kevin gave a quick update on construction at the New Richmond Bridge Park stating the contracts with Apex Contractors have been signed; they have obtained all the necessary insurance and should be on site in the next two weeks to start work.

In regards to Dr. Ellen’s property, Kevin reports there is really nothing to talk about. He was given the impression there might be some wiggle room with the price, however he now believes that not to be the case. There were some miscommunications, and although Kevin was going to have further discussions about the price of the property with the owner’s brother, Stan Ellens, he has not heard back from him. As far as Kevin is concerned, the circumstances have not changed with the property.

BYSTERVELD PARK UPDATE

Kevin reported that the Trust Fund Board of Directors was meeting this evening to discuss all of the 2008 Trust Fund grant applications that were submitted. He stated that, according to the preliminary scoring and ranking sheets, it is unlikely that we will be successful with our grant for Bysterveld Park – Phase II. The slow progression at New Richmond really hurt us and cost us scoring points towards obtaining the grant. There were over 100 development applications submitted to the State in 2008 and we ended up around 80th on the list. We are competing against the whole state and the applications are scored by field staff. We did not have any initiatives to get extra points (every year there are different initiatives the states looks for) and the new scorer did not cut us any slack.

NEW BUSINESS

BYSTERVELD PARK LAND OPPORTUNITY

Kevin requested to go to a closed session of the meeting. A motion was made by Chuck Pullen, seconded by Robert Kaarlie, to move to a closed session. Motion carried by all present.

A motion was made by Fritz Spreitzer, seconded by Robert Kaarlie, to move to an open session of the meeting. Motion carried by all present.

A motion was made by Chuck Pullen, seconded by Fritz Spreitzer, for Kevin Ricco to obtain additional information before the Parks Commission further considers the Bysterveld Park land opportunity. Motion carried by all present.

2009 WINTERFEST AT GUN LAKE PARK

Kevin received a request for a Special Use Permit from the Barry County Chamber of Commerce to hold the 2009 Gun Lake Winterfest at Gun Lake Park on Saturday, February 21, 2009. Kevin reminded everyone of the problems experienced in the last couple years after the Winterfest when there was extensive damage at the park caused by the pony rides, snowplowing in preparation for the broomball tournament, and the use of the restrooms. He spoke to Lynn Hatfield from the Barry County COC, who apologized for the damage caused by last year's event and assured him there would be no problems following the 2009 event. The conditions for the upcoming event that Kevin discussed and were agreed upon by Lynn are as follows:

- No pony rides.
- Snow must be hand-shoveled for broomball instead of plowed.
- The doors to the restrooms will remain locked with absolutely no access.
- Set-up on Thursday and Friday, February 19 and 20.
- Winterfest on Saturday, February 21.
- Everything will be completely removed and cleaned-up by Monday, February 23.

The events planned for the 2009 Winterfest include a pancake breakfast, bake sale, broomball tournament, opening ceremony on the stage, food vendors, polar bear dip, trolley rides, chili cook-off, and music on the stage.

A motion was made by Becky Rininger, seconded by Kelle Tobolic, to approve the Gun Lake Park Special Use Permit request for Barry County Chamber of Commerce to hold the 2009 Gun Lake Winterfest on February 21, 2009, provided that all the requirements set forth are met. Motion carried by all present.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Allegan County Parks Commission will be on Tuesday, January 6, 2009 at 8:30am in the Spartan Conference Room.

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Becky Rininger

Becky opened the round table discussion by commenting on the Silver Creek Park Master Plan presentation. She stated that the Parks Commission would be remiss if they did not put in the sanitation station to develop the park and promote the well-being of the environment. If it would stop just two people from dumping their waste in an unauthorized area and to consider what it costs to clean up a spill, it would be worth the expense to put in the dumping station. In her opinion, she feels that the Commission should not be willing to give in on that. Kelle expressed her full agreement with Becky's statement.

Fritz Spreitzer

Fritz also agreed with Becky, saying there is a misconception among the park users where they are under the assumption they would have to pay to use the dump which is untrue...in fact, there would be no charge for its use. The only negative he sees on the plan is the boulders that were proposed to be used as markers at the campsites. Kevin stated that he saw no reason to keep the boulders either and sees no problem in eliminating them. Fritz believes that once the updates are completed at the two parks, the modern sites will be the ones fought for.

Kevin Ricco

Kevin also believes the sanitation station should stay in the plan and it will not be intrusive at all. In actuality you will hardly even know it's there because it is mainly underground. He added that if the group decides to eliminate the running water throughout the park and resort to hand pumps only, which would include nixing the plans of the showers and restrooms, water would still be available at the station. Fritz interjected that if the running water, showers, and restrooms are decided against they should still remain on the Master Plan in case the decision is reversed in a few years. It would be much easier to have it on the plan and not do it than to decide at a later time we want it and it is no longer on the plan. Kevin also does not recommend reducing the number of electric sites. Since those sites would be the premium sites, they would pay for themselves.

Larry Rassmussen

Larry made the observation that a repeated comment heard from the park users is that they are afraid their camping fees will increase because of these improvements when in reality, the fee would eventually go up whether the improvements were made or not. Becky asked if we would remain comparable to other campgrounds and Kevin replied that we would.

Chuck Pullen

Chuck remarked that over the many years people have gone camping, they have gone from tents to \$50-60,000 rigs. We are providing the capability for them to hook up to electric. Kevin added that people are not flocking to rustic campgrounds, equestrian or otherwise. The main people NOT surveyed are those who are NOT using the campground. We have only surveyed the current users and we need to take the potential users into account if we want to increase the park use and revenue...our goal is to draw people in! As he has mentioned before, there are only three full weekends per year, with the average capacity on the weekends at only 39%.

Robert Kaarlie

Bob stated that there are many kinds of horse people and everyone has their own ideas of how to properly care for horses. In his opinion, the Littlejohn Lake and Silver Creek Master Plans we have set forth will satisfy most everyone's needs.

Kevin ended the meeting by stating that the motion to approve the Silver Creek Master Plan will be placed on the next agenda on January 6, 2009, to give the Parks Commission time to sort out what they want or do not want on the plan.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND NEW YEAR EVERYONE!

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:48am.

By: _____
Ronda Foreman, Clerk