



Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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November 3, 2009

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 Chairman Bruce Culver on Tuesday, November 3, 2009 at 8:28am 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:

PRESENT: Chuck Pullen Mark DeYoung
 Larry Rasmussen Bruce Culver
 Robert Kaarlie Becky Rininger
 Fritz Spreitzer Georgina Rozeboom-Doster

ABSENT: Maryln Langeance Kelle Tobolic

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

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER MEETING MINUTES

A motion was made by Mark DeYoung, seconded by Fritz Spreitzer to approve the September 1, 2009 meeting minutes as presented and mailed. The motion carried by everyone present.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Kevin stated there is not a lot to report on the current financial statements. Once again, due to the lousy weather in October, there were fewer campers than anticipated; usually Silver Creek Campground does very well with equestrians in the fall. Looking to next year's budget, Kevin reported the Parks, Recreation, & Tourism Department's budget was reduced by \$50,000 which has left the Tourist Council without any funding. The group, who is very passionate about promoting tourism in the County, will continue to meet without paid per diem or mileage, and will get as creative as possible to generate funding from outside sources. The reduction to the budget will also have an adverse effect on the county parks as follows:

- Elimination of the boat launch attendants at Dumont Lake and Gun Lake parks.

- Elimination of the park entrance attendant positions at Gun Lake and Littlejohn Lake parks (these two parks will no longer charge entrance fees).
- Reduction in hours from 40 hours per week to 30 hours per week for Littlejohn Lake and West Side park managers.
- Reduction in hours from 40 hours per week to 35 hours per week for the Dumont Lake park manager.
- Reduction in hours and number of weeks worked from 40 hours per week for 30 weeks to 30 hours per week for 28 weeks for the Silver Creek park manager.

The quality that people see when they visit these parks will not be what it was. The park managers will focus only on what is known to be the critical factors such as mowing, cleaning the bathrooms, and picking up the trash; there will be no extra time available for special projects. The elimination of the attendant positions and entrance fees at Gun Lake and Littlejohn Lake parks is reasonable; over the last couple of years, park attendance has been down and the attendant's salaries have outweighed the entrance fees collected.

Kevin voiced his concern for the elimination of the boat launch attendant positions at Dumont Lake and Gun Lake parks. The two boat launches are extremely busy on the weekends and not having an attendant onsite will present an opportunity for boaters not to pay the \$5 boat launch fee. The attendant also directs traffic and sells many season passes while on duty. Kevin asked the Parks Commission if they would be willing to forego their paid per diem and mileage in order to retain the boat launch attendant positions. He stated this is the only option and it is totally up to the group to make the decision. Fritz remarked he is willing to give them up if it means keeping the attendant positions. Bruce stated once they are gone they will be gone forever, and asked if the Parks Commission members could each receive a season pass if the reimbursements are eliminated. Kevin stated the per diem/mileage has never been mandated and have been paid out of appreciation more than anything else; there are many commissions who have never received them. Bob asked if a time limit could be put in place; once the budget comes back to the previous level the Commission could be compensated again. Also, where will the money come from next year if the Parks face further cuts? Kevin stated if there are more budget cuts next year, there will be no other option but to close some parks. Chuck believes the Commission has an obligation to help the parks and keep the boat launch attendant positions going. With two members absent from the meeting, Bruce voiced his disapproval for making the decision when everyone is not present.

A motion was made by Mark DeYoung, seconded by Fritz Spreitzer for the Parks Commission to forego their paid per diem and mileage to finance the two boat launch attendant positions at Gun Lake and Dumont Lake parks for the year 2010, and each member will receive a 2010 season pass. Yeas – 7; Nays – 0; Abstain - 1

Kevin thanked everyone stating it will be very beneficial for the parks and hopes that with the addition of the equestrian trails and campsites, more revenue will be generated next year. Since any funds that are left in the budget cannot be rolled into next year's budget, he informed the Commission he has been preparing for 2010 by purchasing lumber and supplies where feasible, including the replacement of one push mower. There will also be enough funds remaining to have new equestrian trail brochures printed.

A motion was made by Larry Rasmussen, seconded by Georgina Rozeboom-Doster to approve the financial statements as presented. The motion carried by everyone present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW RICHMOND BRIDGE PARK UPDATE

New Richmond Bridge Park is close to being completed; Kevin is meeting with the engineer tomorrow afternoon to do a punch list of the little things left to be done. The park looks really nice, although the boat launch is under water right now after the rain on Friday. Kevin met with Bill Nelson and they turned the bridge;

Parks will be charged with taking care of and maintaining it. The park entrance sign is up although the interpretive signs won't be placed until spring. A variety of tree species and other plant life found in the park will also get marked, and touch up to the seeding will be necessary. The ribbon cutting ceremony will probably be in late April; the Parks Commission can discuss and set the date as the time draws nearer. The boardwalks are done with the exception of some of the hand-rails; the park is about 98% complete at this time.

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS UPDATE

After a conversation with Maria from the DNR, and Kris Allred, the Silver Creek Park Manager, Kevin reports a couple of areas along the trails in Silver Creek will have to be remarked. Other than those spots, Bob confirmed the trails are pretty much done. He is still working on hanging the triangular signs and reports some trees have already fallen across parts of the trails; the trails will require constant maintenance. Fritz asked if we will be able to purchase a 'gator' to maintain the trails and help keep them free of obstructions. Kevin stated that would be up to the County Board to approve as part of a capital budget plan; the volunteers marking the trails have been using their own equipment. Bob went on to report he is going to Lansing for a meeting where other groups are trying to open up more state game areas for equestrian trails. Word is spreading about our trails and more interest is being generated for the rest of the state to open more trails. Bob stated that if we pull this off and the trails are successful, we will be an example for everyone in the state. Kevin agreed and said we will be used as a model throughout the state.

Kevin informed the Commission that once the snow starts to fly, he and Jim Hoover, the Parks Coordinator, will go to Ely Lake and Pine Point campgrounds to pick the sites that will be converted to equestrian sites. Planned are fifteen sites at Ely Lake and ten at Pine Point that will be transformed over the winter, and the picket posts will get installed in the spring. Kevin added he does not want the campgrounds to go entirely to equestrians because there are many non-equestrians who utilize the campgrounds and have for many years. He thought they would start with a low number and see how it plays out. He believes the equestrian sites will be heavily used and if so, more sites can be converted in the future; the goal is to fill the campgrounds. The day use parking lot will cost around \$8000 at Ely Lake Campground. Kevin is waiting for the response to our state recreational trail grant; hopefully we will get it and he will let everyone know when he's informed of the outcome.

NEW BUSINESS

GUN LAKE WINTERFEST REQUEST

Kevin received a letter from Lynn Hatfield representing Barry County COC, who is requesting a special use permit to hold their annual Winterfest on Saturday, February 20, 2010. Set-up would begin on Thursday, February 18 and clean-up will be completed by 5pm on Monday, February 22. They will have use of the park and parking lot, but will not have pony rides, fire pits, or have use of the restrooms (closed/locked for the season). They have requested to use the large grassy area south of the main parking lot to hold their broom ball tournament; Kevin has asked them to clear any snow from this area by hand to protect the turf. Since the fiasco caused by the Winterfest a couple years ago, Kevin has developed a nice relationship with Lynn, who is quite amicable and easy to work with. He stated this is a good community event and he has no problem with granting the permit.

A motion was made by Becky Rininger, seconded by Chuck Pullen to approve the special use permit for Barry County to use Gun Lake Park for their annual Gun Lake Winterfest from February 18 through February 22, 2010, with the event being held on Saturday, February 20, 2010. The motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW OF PARK FEES FOR 2010

The Commission started to discuss the park fees for 2010 at last month's meeting and Kevin stated a decision should be made today. Ultimately, the Board of Commissioners will have to give their final approval for any changes the Commission recommends. Currently, the equestrian trail fee for day riders is \$2 per horse per day and the campsites are \$10 per night, regardless the number of horses. The fees have not been changed in over

ten years and until now there was only six miles of trails to ride. Now with over 50 miles of trails, not to mention the budget cuts, we need more revenue to help offset maintenance costs. Kevin suggests increasing the day rider fee to at least \$4 per horse and a \$2 – \$3 increase per campsite; no adjustments are recommended for the \$25 season pass/special use permit, \$5 boat launch fee, \$5 park entrance fee, or pavilion rentals. Bruce stated it seems the equestrian campsites should get more than a \$2 – \$3 increase since they also have use of the trails. It was then suggested to raise the campsites to \$12 per night plus an additional \$3 per horse, and increase the day rider fee to \$5 per horse per day. Although the season pass cannot be used towards camping fees, it can be used for the horse fees. Kevin was asked about the park fee study that was done earlier this year; although he received the report, there were no recommendations attached.

A motion was made by Mark DeYoung, seconded by Fritz Spreitzer to increase the day rider fee from \$2 per horse/per day to \$5 per horse/per day. The motion carried by everyone present.

A motion was made by Mark DeYoung, seconded by Fritz Spreitzer to increase the campsite fee from \$10 per night to \$12 per night, plus an additional \$3 per horse for anyone without a season pass; if a person has a season pass, they will pay for camping only. The motion carried with a five to three vote.

Ayes 5; Nays 3; Absent 2; Abstaining 0

BLUE STAR TRAIL

Kevin has been meeting with a group in South Haven that is working to connect the Kal-Haven Trail to the Lakeshore Trail in Saugatuck and Laketown Townships. He has been working on this for at least four months with people from all over Allegan County and surrounding counties, MDOT, and other organizations. The project started with South Haven, Casco, and Saugatuck Townships who wanted to link the trails. Kevin stated it is a nice project that is generating a lot of interest; at this time there is no safe route for bikers to ride and once the trails are linked, the trails are anticipated to be well used. If anyone is interested in volunteering, please get in touch with Kevin.

2010 MEETING SCHEDULE DISCUSSION

Attached to everyone's agendas is the proposed schedule for the 2010 Parks Commission meetings to be held the first Tuesday every month. Kevin asked if anyone would be interested in doing a joint meeting once or twice a year with the Tourist Council. He stated it would be an informational meeting and would be a nice way for the two groups to have some discussion and stay connected; the two groups have a lot of things that are interrelated. Kevin suggested a joint meeting in February since that month generally tends to have less business items on the agenda. The Parks Commission agreed to the idea; Kevin will propose the offer to the Tourist Council during their next meeting on November 10.

A motion was made by Becky Rininger, seconded by Bob Kaarlie to approve the 2010 Parks Commission meeting dates as proposed. The motion carried by everyone present.

NEXT MEETING – DECEMBER 1, 2009 @ 8:30AM

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Bruce Culver stated he still doesn't like the decision to eliminate the paid per diems and mileage with two people absent from the meeting.

Georgina Rozeboom-Doster was contacted by Emily Stough who does international coastal cleanup. Emily informed Georgina her volunteer group cleaned up four miles of Lake Michigan shoreline in the Saugatuck/Douglas area, including West Side Park and Pier Cove. Everything collected must be recorded and the group picked up 55 pounds of debris; 10 pounds at Pier Cove alone. The cleanup is done annually on the third Saturday in September. Kevin asked if he could obtain a copy of the data of items collected; Georgina stated yes, she would contact Emily for a copy.

Becky Rininger reported the City of Allegan dedicated the new skate park with a ribbon cutting ceremony the end of October. She stated the park looks small from the road, but once you get down in there it is huge. She is impressed by the kids who use the park; it was designed using their input. The park can also be used as an amphitheatre and has a little sledding hill for the winter season. Becky stated it was a great thing to do for the kids; it gives them a place to go instead of on the downtown sidewalks plus, the park is located right next to the police department. The skate park was voted in by the community and was paid using the city sinking fund.

Kevin Ricco is finalizing the Parks 5-Year Comprehensive Master Plan and will pass out copies to the Parks Commission in December for their review. The plan must be available for 30 days for the community to review and then there will be a public hearing in January, 2010. After the public hearing the Parks Commission can give their approval and then the master plan will be presented to the Board of Commissioners for their approval.

Chuck Pullen asked if the volunteers can have a friendly note handy to put on the windshields of vehicles in the staging area of the equestrian trails and do not have a tag displayed that shows they have paid for day riding. Kevin stated that should come from FACETS, not from the Parks Office. If they want to do this, the Parks Office will back them up.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:18am.

By: _____
Ronda Foreman, Clerk