



Allegan County Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

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May 4, 2010

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, May 4, 2010 at 8:30am in the Spartan Conference Room in the lower level of the Human Services Building, 3255 122nd Ave, Suite 102, Allegan, Michigan. He welcomed Lenore Ryun to her first meeting as a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Roll Call showed the following members:

PRESENT:

Chuck Pullen	Mark DeYoung
Larry Rasmussen	Bruce Culver
Robert Kaarlie	Becky Rininger
Kelle Tobolic	Maryln Langeance
Lenore Ryun	

ABSENT: Fritz Spreitzer

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

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

A motion was made by Mark DeYoung, seconded by Kelle Tobolic to approve the agenda as presented and mailed. The motion carried by everyone present.

APPROVAL OF MARCH MEETING MINUTES

Bruce reminded everyone the April meeting had been canceled, therefore the March meeting minutes are up for approval at this time. A motion was made by Becky Rininger, seconded by Larry Rasmussen to approve the March 2, 2010 meeting minutes as presented and mailed. The motion carried by everyone present.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Kevin stated there really is nothing specific; the bulk of the expenses relate to the seasonal supplies for the opening of the parks. On the revenue report, Silver Creek is already at \$10,000 thus far, which is pretty substantial. With no further questions, a motion was made by Maryln Langeance, seconded by Becky Rininger to approve the financial statements as presented. The motion carried by everyone present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NEW RICHMOND BRIDGE PARK – RIBBON CUTTING UPDATE, PARK UPDATE

The ribbon cutting update sheet for New Richmond Bridge Park and the equestrian trails are included in everyone's agenda packets. Kevin stated everything is progressing nicely with the New Richmond celebration at 10am on Saturday, June 5; the confirmed speakers are listed and all of their bios will be provided to Bruce, who will be moderating the ceremony. Tourist Council member Lue Crane, and Kevin's wife Esther, will be providing the refreshments, while more beverages are still needed. Bruce suggested everyone bring a cold twelve-pack of juice, water or soda and everyone agreed to do so; Kevin has a large tub which he will fill with ice. He also asked everyone to bring his or her treats and beverages to the ceremony and not to his office. Mark stated he has a large thermos and will work on bringing coffee.

Ronda will order red, white and blue decorations for the bridge where the ceremony will be held. Kevin will have a public address system set-up and also a podium, which he will borrow from the Spartan Conference Room. Bruce mentioned having the US flag next to the podium and suggested borrowing the flag from the conference room also. Depending on the number of people in attendance, the turning of the bridge may have to be done in two groups; the last time the bridge was open with a lot of people on it, we had trouble closing it. Kevin said there would be tables set-up with information for the Tourist Council's Heritage Trail and another for the Sturgeon for Tomorrow group.

Kevin reported there is a lot of interest in the grand opening of the park and it has been getting a lot of good comments. It is being held on a Saturday and if the weather is nice, there could be a couple hundred people in attendance. The interpretive signs are all in place and the Road Commission is working on a commemorative sign. Kevin still has the donor plaques in his office, which will be installed before the ceremony. With little rainfall in recent weeks, the Kalamazoo River is down and the boat dock is set too high and must be adjusted to the water level (all three County boat launches are designed to be adjustable).

Kevin also reported there is a big issue with the runoff from the hill across the street from the park. Back in early April there was a moderately heavy rain that washed 6" of mud into the parking lot; logs, debris and sediment washed from across the street from the culvert where there is nothing to trap the sediment. Kevin stated he had to hire someone to come in and clean it out and is currently working with the Road Commission to address the problem.

EQUESTRIAN TRAILS UPDATE – RIBBON CUTTING UPDATE

Next, Kevin reminded everyone the ceremony for the equestrian trails is coming up in two weeks on Friday, May 21 at 2pm. Bruce agreed to be the moderator and the speakers have been confirmed and are listed on the update sheet in the order they will be speaking. The DNRE is going to supply the water and soda and Esther and Jan Cushman from the Tourist Council will be bringing cookies. The ceremony will be held right in the center of the park by the creek. Kevin has no idea how many people will be in attendance and does not believe there will be much more than 100, although there could be due to the judged riding event that is taking place the next day at the park. There should be plenty of parking in the day riding and other areas.

NEW BUSINESS

GUN LAKE PARK BOAT LAUNCH

Kevin stated he has received many complaints regarding the boat launch at Gun Lake Park, which is very old and has problems that have gotten worse over the past few years. There are huge gaps between some of the concrete planks that are creating a safety hazard and need replacing. Kevin stated there are funds available to do the repairs necessary to address the safety issues, even though there are still planks underwater that need replacing but not enough money available to do the work at this time. He is getting price quotes for repairs on the concrete approach. The boat launch will have to be closed for about a week but once the job is done it will be a lot nicer and should be more user friendly. Signs will be posted informing users of the upcoming closing when the dates are set, probably sometime in June.

A motion was made by Chuck Pullen, seconded by Becky Rininger to make the improvements necessary to address the safety concerns at the Gun Lake Park boat launch. The motion passed unanimously.

STRIDES FOR LIFE – GALE FISHER REQUEST TO WAIVE ENTRANCE FEES AT WEST SIDE

Kevin was contacted by Gale Fisher who represents Strides for Life, an annual walk/run fundraising event scheduled for June 18, 2010 with a stopover at West Side Park. There will be approximately 40-50 participants and Gale asks the Parks Commission to waive the vehicle entrance fee for 5-10 vehicles for the volunteers who are providing refreshments to the runners/walkers; Chuck suggested giving them day passes to enter the park.

A motion was made by Becky Rininger, seconded by Larry Rasmussen to provide Gale Fisher with 10 day passes to be used by the Strides for Life volunteers on June 18, 2010 to enter West Side Park. The motion passed unanimously.

JOINT MEETING WITH TOURIST COUNCIL

The Parks Commission members received an email the beginning of April regarding a proposal by RJ Peterson to hold a joint meeting with the Tourist Council he will be hosting at Tower Marine in June. Kevin's perspective is there is usually a lot of Park Commission business to take care of in June and although joint meetings can be useful, it may not be the best time of year to hold it; Bob agreed and suggested combining the meetings in September. Kevin stated by fall, not only will the summer season be winding down, we will also have a better understanding of the 2011 budget and what that might mean to the two groups.

A motion was made by Larry Rasmussen, seconded by Lenore Ryun that, although the offer is appreciated, holding a joint meeting will be reconsidered in the fall. The motion carried by everyone present.

2011 BUDGET

Kevin informed the Commission that by the end of May, he has to turn in revenue projections for 2011, which will be a difficult task considering we are at the beginning of the 2010 season. Implemented this year are increases in the camping rate and trail fees along with the opening of almost 60 miles of equestrian trails that will hopefully draw more people, plus the new boat launch fee at New Richmond Bridge Park. Also new is the elimination of the entrance and boat launch attendant positions and entrance fees at various parks, having a negative effect on their revenue. Kevin knows the next budget will be tight and one thing Administration is trying to do is focus on finding efficiencies.

From the perspective of the parks, it is hard to find ways to be more efficient and effective when there are already minimal personnel at the parks due to last year's budget cuts. The department is already at the tipping point and if there were more cuts, there would be no other choice but to close the parks. Kevin stated in 2009 between Memorial Day and Labor Day, he calculated approximately 170,000 visitors to our parks, which he feels may even be on the conservative side. To close the parks for even one season would be a tremendous impact on the community and there would be costs incurred to reopen them. Closing the parks would also affect future State grants, since part of the agreement when obtaining a grant is the park will remain open to the public.

NEXT MEETING – JUNE 1, 2010 @ 8:30AM

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Kevin Ricco had a couple more things to mention; a big thank you goes out to everyone who volunteered last week at Ely Lake and Pine Point Campgrounds to help install the picket posts for the new equestrian campsites. He also reports the seasonal park managers started last week and as of Saturday, May 1, all of the county parks are now open. Lastly, the Tourist Council is holding a special meeting at 10am on Wednesday, May 19, in the Spartan Conference Room where creating a countywide Convention and Visitor's Bureau will be the topic of discussion. There will be a Q&A session with Dave Lorenz from West Michigan Tourist Association, who is

well versed in the procedures when forming a CVB. If anyone is interested, they are welcome to attend the meeting.

Lenore Ryun stated Kris Allred, Silver Creek Park Manager, is going to send thank-you notes out to the volunteers who helped with the picket posts. She then inquired about the progress of the day ride parking lot at Ely Lake Campground and maps of the trails. Kevin stated the day ride parking area will be completed before Memorial Day weekend, and a big color map that zooms into the trail numbers will be hung at the information center of the campground.

Mark DeYoung informed everyone of a new event at the fairgrounds called 'Spring Flair' scheduled for May 21-23, and is a fundraiser for the Allegan County Fair that is held in September.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:11.

By: _____
Ronda Foreman, Parks and Tourism Clerk