



MINUTES

CALHOUN COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Thursday, November 3, 2016
315 W. Green St., 1-400, Marshall, MI 49068

1. Chair King called the meeting to order at 4:01.

2. Roll Call – Michigan State University Extension Support Staff, Pat Dadow

Present: Annette Chapman, Bill Comai, Derek King, Allyn Miller, John Rodwan, Ron Sootsman, Blaine VanSickle

Absent: Jesse Jacox, Lindsay Johnson, Christine Kosmowski

Also Present: Community Development Educator Ingrid Ault, County Administrator Kelli Scott, Assistant County Administrator Brad Wilcox, MSU Extension Support Staff Pat Dadow

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Member Miller, second by Member Sootsman to amend the November 3, 2016 agenda of the Calhoun County Parks and Recreation Commission and add items 8b "Siting Signs along Trailway" and 8c "Beaver Study – Potawatomi Resource Conservation and Development Council" as action items under New Business as presented by Ault.

On a voice vote, Motion **CARRIED**.

4. Approval of Minutes

Moved by Member Chapman, second by Member VanSickle to approve the October 6, 2016 minutes of the Calhoun County Parks and Recreation Commission as presented by Sootsman.

On a voice vote, Motion **CARRIED**.

5. Public Comment

Mr. Jim Coury remarked that the work of pruning trees and cutting down weeds the Victory Life Church did in the Parks was great. Community Development Educator Ault added that Mr. Coury's help was also greatly appreciated.

6. Subcommittee Reports

a. Historic Bridge Park Workgroup

Community Development Educator Ault reported that the Historic Bridge Park Work Group is making good progress. Ault mentioned they are using an app from the GIS department that will help make the process of inventory, maintenance and management more simple and efficient. She reminded the Commissioners that we have Miss Clayborne, a volunteer intern, who is working on collecting the inventory data. Ault stated she hopes the inventory will be done in a few weeks and the Management and Maintenance Plan is expected to be completed in the Spring of 2017.

b. Interactive Map – Staff report

Community Development Educator Ault deferred to discuss the Interactive map during the Volunteer Appreciation Party discussion.

c. Trailway Workgroup

Community Development Educator Ault stated the Trailway Maintenance and Management Plan has been forwarded to the Trailway Alliance for comments. The Trailway Alliance will have their board meeting on November 9, 2016 and will provide their comments at that time. The Trailway Work Group will incorporate any recommended comments or changes to the Plan and will in turn bring the Plan back to the Parks and Recreation Commission to approve. The Trailway Workgroup will then forward the Plan to the public through the outreach process. The timeframe to have the Trailway Maintenance and Management Plan completed is February or March of 2017.

7. Unfinished Business

a. Ott Biological Preserve Public Meeting

Community Development Educator Ault reported herself and Brian Huggett, Potawatomi Resources Conservation and Development Director conducted the public meeting on Thursday, October 13th. Ault mentioned they received some specific feedback from the public about the Ott Biological Preserve Maintenance and Management Plan regarding animal control. She noted that the public comments suggested they would like to have a more thorough description of the animal management that has been done in the park, specific to beaver and mute swan.

Community Development Educator Ault stated the final meeting is scheduled for November 10, 2016, 5:00 pm. in the Law Library. The Ott Biological Preserve workgroup will make the necessary amendments to the plan at this meeting and bring the finished product to the Parks and Recreations Commissioners and the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners in December.

b. Volunteer Appreciation Party – Saturday May 13, 2017

Community Development Educator Ault has scheduled the Volunteer Appreciation Party for Saturday, May 13, 2017 from 12:00 to 2:00 pm at Historic Bridge Park. She stated this will be a dual launch with the unveiling of the Interactive Map. Ault mentioned that the volunteer list is getting quite long.

c. Bat Houses – Sam Reasons

Community Development Educator Ault explained the fundraising for the siting of the signs about the bat houses Miss Reasons is seeking has not been as successful as she had hoped. Therefore she feels it is going to take longer than expected to get this project completed.

d. Any other unfinished business

There was none.

8. New Business

a. Capital Improvement Request – Kimball Pines Pavilion

Community Development Educator Ault stated she submitted two project requests to the Capital Improvement Advisory Committee.

1. A new park entrance sign for Kimball Pines and two for the Ott Biological Preserve for \$6,239.50
2. A replacement pavilion with cement pad, and six picnic tables for Kimball Pines for \$44,991.00

Ault explained the Capital Improvement request process is very competitive. She stated the Finance Subcommittee recommended that the Parks and Recreation Commission use the insurance settlement from the straight line winds destruction in 2011 to partially fund the cost of the pavilion. The amount remaining from that claim is \$21,375.31.

County Administrator Kelli Scott wanted it made clear that the cost of replacing the pavilion is an estimate and the final cost will be a part of a competitive bid process.

Moved by Member Miller, second by Member VanSickle to approve the request to fund the Capital Improvement Program request up to \$20,000 if granted by the Capital Improvement Program Advisory Committee.

On a voice vote, Motion **CARRIED**.

b. Siting of Signs along Trailway

Community Development Educator Ault proposed the installation of signs along the Trailway that were recommended by a team of representatives from the North Country Trail- Chief Noonday Chapter, the City of Battle Creek Facilities Department, the Calhoun County Trailway Alliance and the Office of Community Development. The team met to discuss what type of signs was needed and where to site them. The Calhoun County Trailway Alliance received a grant that will fund these signs. The Office of Community Development and the Parks Department believes the installation of signs will increase the visibility of the Trailway and provide an avenue for communication to the public regarding Trailway information and behavior expectations.

Moved by Member Chapman, second by Member Sootsman to approve the recommended request to site signs along the Trailway as presented by Ault.

On a voice vote, Motion **CARRIED**.

c. Beaver Study – Potawatomi Resources Conservation and Development Council

Community Development Educator Ault stated the Ott Biological Preserve workgroup discussed the beaver activity in the park and the proposal of doing an in-depth beaver study to provide good data and understand the situation and how best to manage the beaver population.

Brian Huggett, Potawatomi Resources Conservation and Development Director and member of the Ott Biological Preserve workgroup explained his research proposal. Huggett stated he wanted to quantify the effects of the beavers. He will be working with Brett Riser from the Calhoun County Conservation District to conduct an observational study of beaver populations and their influences from a hydrologic standpoint. Huggett stated that the study will be provided at no cost and would take approximately one year to complete.

Specifically they intend to:

1. Map the location of current beaver lodges and dams and gather metrics on those dams (height, length)
2. Measure the extent of inundation produced by each beaver dam and estimate the amount of water retained by each dam
3. Document the habitat modified by beaver dam construction (i.e. are of saplings and trees removed)
4. Note all relevant park or municipal infrastructure that may run afoul of beaver activity

Member Miller suggested inviting Science students from Harper Creek High School to join Huggett in his research.

Moved by Member Chapman, second by Member Comai to approve the proposed research study of beavers in the Calhoun County park systems as presented.

On a voice vote, Motion **CARRIED**.

d. Any other new business

There was none.

9. Community Development Educator Report

Community Development Educator Ault provided a Power Point presentation of what has been happening in the parks.

- Ault expressed gratitude to Victory Life Church volunteers and Mr. Jim Coury for pruning trees, clearing weeds, taking care of erosion and cutting vegetation from the sculpture in the Parks.
- Ault reported volunteer Brent Brown removed logs in the river with his heavy equipment.
- She also thanked Ron Sootsman for taking care of some graffiti that was on one of the Trailway signs.

- She noted that the Michigan Search and Rescue team met at Kimball Pines on October 12 with their canine group to practice search and rescue skills. She shared this on Facebook.

10. Commissioners' Time

Member VanSickle shared a story about beavers destroying his property and many others upstream. He explained that the beaver eat the habitat and under brush and then build a tremendous dam taking down many trees in the process. He stated the water gets deeper and wider and then the trees are under water. He said beavers have no natural predators in this area; they have 4 to 5 babies a year and they continue to multiply. He is concerned that they can block roadways and miles of stream and become very destructive. VanSickle explained he is not against the beaver or wildlife; he wants to see a controlled number. He stated that moving the beaver will just create another problem later on.

Member King stated that we used a state licensed Department of Natural Resources approved trapper to remove them. King explained the DNR has protocol and regulations that the Parks and Recreation Commission has no control over.

Member Miller observed that the Kiosks at Arlington needs work. Community Development Educator Ault took note and mentioned that that Kiosk gets vandalized a lot.

11. Public Comment

Mr. Jim Coury mentioned that the Brooks Nature Area, City of Marshall had a very successful trick or trails event with 550 people attending.

12. Adjournment

The November 4, 2016 regular session of the Calhoun County Parks and Recreation Commission adjourned at 4:47 pm.