

LaPorte County Park Board Meeting

August 1, 2023 Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

- Present: All present
- Guests: ALCO TV, Joe Haney, Dan Masena, Earl Cunningham, Members of the "Pickle Ball Club"

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- Ron made a suggestion to move the public comment to the sixth thing on the agenda so the Pickle Ball Club could make their comments then instead of having to sit through the whole meeting.
- Mary Nell made a motion to change the agenda, seconded by Mary. Motion carried 7-0.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- No changes or additions to the minutes from last meeting.
- Mary made a motion to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Jim. Motion passed 7-0.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Dan Masena from a group of pickle ball players, informed the Board of the growing popularity of pickle ball. They are in need of a facility at which to play. They have used the YMCA facility, but desire an outdoor facility.
- Earl Cunningham, County Councilman, also from the pickle ball group, presented a request to the Park Board to install a pickle board court at one of the County Parks, specifically Creek Ridge.
- Pickle ball requires an asphalt base. Four pickle ball courts can fit in the space of one tennis court. Courts should run north and south to avoid looking into the sun.
- Pickle ball is a noisy sport, and the pickle ball club thinks Creek Ridge is an ideal location due to the thick tree barrier between the park and the residential area.
- They suggest a possible collaboration between the La Porte County Parks and Michigan City Parks.
- Earl also pointed out that the Parks have lots of programs and equipment geared toward young people and children (new playgrounds), but not much for older adults, which accounts for the majority of pickle ball players.
- Estimated cost would be approximately \$160,000 for four courts. Ongoing costs for maintenance and upkeep is relatively minimal. Asphalt lasts over ten years.

- Following discussion and questions, it was suggested that the Planning Committee partner with the pickle ball people to get more details.
- Mary Nell made a motion for the Planning Committee to get together with Jeremy and look further into pickle ball, seconded by Erin. Motion passed 7-0.
- Earl Cunningham added that if anyone wanted to get together with him and watch a pickle ball game, see Jeremy for his phone number.
- Joe Haney also made a public comment: Mentioned the positive feedback the parks got from a visitor to Luhr park, said that the Park Dept. is doing a great job and keep up the good work.

VII. FINANCIAL REPORTS

- Jim made a motion to approve the financial report, seconded by Amanda. Motion passed 7-0.

VIII. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. Administrative Report

1. Status update on restrooms at Creek Ridge
 - ❖ Construction is moving along; the goal is to be completed by Pioneer Days
2. Accessible picnic table donation at Bluhm
 - ❖ Table is installed and shelter has been erected over it right next to the accessible playground. This project is now finished!
3. Park website status update
 - ❖ Still working with Sera Group; progress is being made!
 - ❖ When this webpage is launched, Jeremy anticipates that it will get a lot more views than our current, outdated webpage
 - ❖ Mary Nell inquired about a Spanish option seeing as we have a substantial Spanish-speaking customer base; Jeremy said he would mention this at the next meeting with Sera
4. Added item: Jeremy is looking for a band to have at Pioneer Days. This has been a frequent request from the public. Cripple Creek not available. They may be able to put us on their schedule for next year.

B. Maintenance & Construction Report

C. Programs Report

- ❖ Seed library project is pretty much finished.

- ❖ Night Hikes have been quite successful. April is hoping to do a Night Hike every month going forward.

D. Park Counts

IX. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Executive Committee: Ron and Jim

- ❖ No report

B. Budget Committee: Erin and Mary

- ❖ Update from 2024 budget hearing on July 24, 2023
- ❖ All requests for increases in 2024 have been approved
- ❖ 12 % overall budget increase for 2024 in office supplies, uniforms, fuel, equipment repair, instructional training, electric, waste disposal, & safety/first aid

C. Personnel Committee: Erin and Mary

- ❖ No report

D. Property Committee: Mike and Mary Nell

- ❖ Jeremy gave the update on the Bluhm expansion project
- ❖ Price has been agreed upon; there would be a dual closing, and at that time, DNR immediately turns ownership to the County
- ❖ A maintenance fund will be in place as well
- ❖ Part of the agreement is that the land will remain a natural area in perpetuity

E. Planning Committee: Amanda and Mary Nell

- ❖ No report

F. Rules Committee: Amanda and Mike

- ❖ Smoking in County Parks continued discussion
- ❖ Jeremy has been to the smoking cessation meetings. They would like to see more signage regarding *No Smoking*, especially in the shelters and around the playgrounds
- ❖ Earl Cunningham mentioned a Facebook survey done by a local bar that has allowed smoking for many years, but is now considering going smoke-free and the results were overwhelmingly in favor of making it a non-smoking establishment
- ❖ Erin asked about the possibility of having a smoking cessation awareness table at Pioneer Days

X. OLD BUSINESS

- No old business

XI. NEW BUSINESS

- Next Levels Trail grant: Jeremy requested that the Park Board cast their support behind Jeremy assisting Westville with obtaining this grant
- Mary made a motion, seconded by Mary Nell to approve Jeremy helping Westville with the Next Level Trails grant. Motion passed 7-0.
- Approval needed to proceed with having Johnson Septic Service install the septic for the new Creek Ridge restrooms
- Jim made a motion, seconded by Amanda, to approve having Johnson Septic Service install the CR restroom septic system. Motion carried 7-0.

XII. BOARD & STAFF COMMENTS

- Erin expressed her appreciation to Jeremy and the maintenance team for their quick action in fixing a small wheelchair accessibility issue at Bluhm
- Erin also shared great feedback on the new program staff
- Mike also commented on how great a job April did at a recent event he attended
- Ron shared a request for wood chips along the fence line in the dog parks
- Jeremy said that he is looking into a solution that is a little more permanent than wood chips

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

- Jim made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mary. Motion carried 7-0. Meeting adjourned.