

LaPorte County Park Board Meeting

May 9, 2023 Minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

- Present: Amanda Nebelung, Erin Lozano, Mike King, Mary Komenas, Ron Knickrehm, Mary Nell Murphy
- Absent: Jim Holifield
- Guests: ALCO TV, John Hartigan, April Messacar, Cara Fitzgerald, Greg Coulter

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- Order of agenda changed to do roll call before Pledge of Allegiance
- Jeremy clarified that there were two additions to the advertised agenda, Resolution 16-01 to adopt the Master Plan, and discussion regarding tearing down the old dilapidated shelter at Red Mill.
- Mary moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Erin. Motion carried 6-0.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Mike made a motion to approve the minutes from last meeting, seconded by Amanda. Motion passed 6-0.

VI. FINANCIAL REPORTS

- Jeremy expressed concern that the Equipment Repairs account was already down to only \$56.00 due to major repairs on his vehicle: suspension and AC,
- The park van and Jeremy's vehicle are slated to be replaced next year, so we are needing to keep them operational until then.
- We may need to ask the council for additional funds for that account.
- Mary Nell made a motion to approve the financial report, seconded by Mike. Motion passed 6-0.

VII. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. Administrative Report

1. Update on hiring
 - We have full staff already!
 - Two return seasonals and two new ones.
 - Part-time office person is also doing the gardener position.
2. New staff introductions
 - John Hartigan- new Maintenance Tech, at Creek Ridge
 - Cara FitzGerald- new Recreation & Education Programmer
 - April Messacar- new Chief Naturalist
3. Asphalt repairs/sealing plan
 - This will be for almost all the parking lots and paved trails
 - County Council approved funds from ARP money for this project
 - Awaiting price quotes and warm weather
4. Status report on new restrooms at Creek Ridge
 - We are finalizing the septic plans
 - Next step is to submit septic plans to the County for approval
 - Building plan is currently awaiting approval from the State

B. Maintenance & Construction Report

- Maintenance staff is in high gear to get the parks ready for the busy summer season
- Seasonal positions are all filled

C. Programs Report

D. Park Counts

VIII. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Executive Committee: Ron and Jim

- No report

B. Budget Committee: Erin and Mary

- No report

C. Personnel Committee: Erin and Mary

- No report

D. Property Committee: Mike and Mary Nell

- Appraiser has been out to the property

- Landowner dissatisfied with the appraisal; is hiring his own appraiser
- Landowner DOES want this to happen; there are a few things to work out
- Another meeting planned with the DNR to iron out some of the details

E. Planning Committee: Amanda and Mary Nell

F. Rules Committee: Amanda and Mike

- Discussion on smoking in the parks- see new business

IX. OLD BUSINESS

- No old business

X. NEW BUSINESS

- Greg Coulter of Healthy Communities of LaPorte County (Public Health non-profit), working to reduce the impact of tobacco in LaPorte County
- Greg explained the effects of tobacco on the environment, beyond the effects on one's personal health
- Partial smoking ban vs. total smoking ban—Smoking banned in specific areas or no smoking allowed anywhere
- Policy vs. ordinance—Ordinance is punishable by fine; policy involves signage and voluntary cooperation on the part of the park patrons
- Ron asked if other parks phased-in the *No Smoking* policies or just switched to total *No Smoking* on a specific date
- Jeremy inquired regarding compliance at other parks that have switched to *No Smoking*. Greg did not have any information on that.
- Greg believes that NO SMOKING signs counter the message that children subconsciously receive when they see adults smoking.
- Mary Nell shared that Sebert Woods would be a logical place to begin implementation of a total smoking ban.
- Mary made a motion to move this discussion to the Rules Committee, seconded by Mary Nell. Motion carried 6-0.

- Resolution 16-01 to adopt 2023-2028 Master Plan—Ron read the resolution which stated that our Master Plan was approved and is eligible to receive grant money.
- Mike made a motion to submit the final signature page for adoption of the Master Plan, seconded by Amanda. Motion passed 6-0.
- Final item under new business: Discussion on tearing down the dilapidated shelter at Red Mill, It is in an inconvenient location and in unsafe condition. Motion made to tear it down made by Erin, seconded by Amanda. Motion passed 6-0.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment

XII. BOARD & STAFF COMMENTS

- Ron: Glad to have all the new park employees here!
- Jeremy: Excited to see the fresh viewpoint that our new employees will bring to the park programs.
- Mary Nell: Dunes Birding Festival starts tomorrow!
- Jeremy: Thanked everyone on staff and board for being patient, supportive, and capable of “holding down the fort” while he was away from the office for several family illnesses and deaths in recent months.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

- Mary made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mary Nell. Motion carried 6-0.