

**LaPorte County Park Board Meeting**  
**February 7, 2023 Minutes**

I. CALL TO ORDER

- Ron Knickrehm called the meeting to order at 5:04 PM

II. ROLL CALL

- Present: Ron Knickrehm, Jim Holifield, Mary Komenas, Mike King, Amanda Nebelung, Jeremy Sobecki, and Cathy Fuller
- Absent: Erin Lozano and Mary Nell Murphy
- Guests: Joe Haney, Alco TV

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- No additions or corrections were made to the agenda.
- Mary made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Jim. Motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- No additions or corrections to the minutes from Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Jim made a motion to approve the minutes; Amanda seconded; motion passed 5-0.

V. FINANCIAL REPORTS

- The auditor's office has not uploaded the amounts to the LOW system at the time of this meeting. Amounts listed are based on the amounts requested by Jeremy.
- Mike made a motion to approve the financial report; Amanda seconded; motion passed 5-0.

VI. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS

A. Administrative Report

1. Update on playground projects

- Completed except for a few minor tweaks.
- Final walk-throughs with the contractor have been done.
- The natural gaps in the wood structures will be filled by the contractors.
- Putting a plan together for a grand-opening event in the spring.

2. Update on possible Bluhm expansion

- Appraiser hired by the DNR has dropped out of the project.
- DNR is in the process of hiring a new appraiser.
- Jeremy met with land owner last week about property lines adjustments.
- Nothing set in stone, but things are coming together.

### 3. Update on staffing

- In process of hiring a part-time office person as one is leaving at the end of February.
- Niki is in process of hiring two seasonal Nature Center attendants.
- We had to let our most recent maintenance tech, so we have interviewed and selected Jonathan Hartigan from the Building Maintenance Dept. to fill that position.
- Currently interviewing for the Chief Naturalist position.

### B. Maintenance & Construction Report

- Maintenance crew has been busy doing maintenance on equipment to get ready for summer.
- Upcoming work on EEC to put finishing touches on the job done by EverDry.

### C. Programs Report

- Niki has quite a few school programs on her schedule before her retirement date.
- Niki is going full-throttle right up to the last day!
- Daddy/Daughter Dance on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of February.

### D. Park Counts

- Report in the packet

## VII. 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

- If you wish to be on a different committee, just let Erin or Mary know.

### D. Property Committee: Mike and Mary Nell

- No report.

### E. Planning Committee: Amanda and Mary Nell

- If you have any comments/issues with the Master Plan, please let Jeremy know.
- The Master Plan allows us to apply for various grants. Here are some highlights:
  - ❖ Expansion of trail from Bluhm to PNW
  - ❖ New Nature Center displays
  - ❖ Wetland restoration and observation tower at Luhr
  - ❖ Install flush restrooms and running water sinks at Creek Ridge

- ❖ Relocate the boat barn at Red Mill
- ❖ Possibly develop the area around the gazebo at Red Mill
- ❖ Possibly further expansion of the trail from PNW to Michigan City
- ❖ Solar panels at the parks to mitigate the NIPSCO expenses
- ❖ Possible 2<sup>nd</sup> picnic shelter at Bluhm
- ❖ Possible connecting trail from Luhr to Kesling Park via the new 18<sup>th</sup> street bike path

F. Rules Committee: Amanda and Mike

- No report.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

- Request to approve the submission of the 2023 Master Plan final draft to the DNR
- Motion made to do so by Mary; seconded by Amanda; motion passed 5-0.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

- Jeremy and Cathy have new email addresses:
  - ❖ [jsobecki@laporteco.in.gov](mailto:jsobecki@laporteco.in.gov)
  - ❖ [cfuller@laporteco.in.gov](mailto:cfuller@laporteco.in.gov)

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Joe Haney- glad we are moving forward with the Master Plan and he offered help in any way available; mentioned the new department called Center for Economic Development, Planning, and Governmental Affairs which can help chase down various grants and funding for future projects.

XI. BOARD & STAFF COMMENTS

- Jeremy mentioned that the 2022 Annual Report is on the website. If anyone has any questions, comments, or suggestions, contact our office.
- Ron is doing an author talk at the library in Peotone, IL on Feb. 14, 2023, as well as one at the main branch of the LaPorte County Library on Mar. 6, 2023 at 6:00 PM.
- Jeremy suggested an author talk at the Nature Center once the new staff is hired.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

- Jim made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Mary; motion passed 5-0.