

La Porte County Park Board Meeting

February 6, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: Ron called the meeting to order at 5:02

ROLL CALL:

- Present: Amanda Nebelung, Mike King, Nick Landers, Jim Holifield, Ron Knickrehm, Mary Komenas
- Absent: Mary Nell Murphy
- Guests: ALCO TV, Rich Mrozinski (via Zoom)

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

- Mary made a motion to approve the agenda
- Mike seconded the motion
- Motion carried 6-0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- Jim made a motion to approve the minutes as written
- Amanda seconded the motion
- Motion carried 6-0

PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment

FINANCIAL REPORTS

- Mike made a motion to approve the financial report
- Jim seconded the motion
- Motion carried 6-0

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS

1. Administrative Report

- Bluhm DNR Project update
 - Obtaining purchase agreement
 - Working with landowner and DNR to accommodate landowner on several stipulations
 - Landowner is donating a significant amount of money, not in dollars, but in value of land, and he wants that shown in the agreement
 - Jeremy is optimistic that all details will be worked out and that the deal will go through
- Park Foundation Budgets for 2024

- The La Porte County Parks Foundation Board has approved over \$75,000 toward improvements at Bluhm and Luhr
- Most of the projects will be completed in-house, except the removal of invasives and the roof of the Grove shelter

2. Maintenance & Construction Report

3. Program Report

4. Park Counts

- 2023 totals: We have had over 100,000 more park visitors in 2023 than in the previous year!
- New playgrounds and restrooms have attracted many more people to the parks
- Jeremy is looking into possibly utilizing an app called "Play-On" which the HFL has taken an interest in. It is an app that promotes healthy living through participation in park events, programs, and facilities
- An HFL survey has shown that people are looking for more parks-centered *social* groups, such as running club, hiking club, etc.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. Executive Committee: Ron and Jim

- No report

2. Budget Committee: Erin and Mary

- No report

3. Personnel Committee: Erin and Mary

- Superintendent performance review
 - Mary thanked everyone for submitting a performance review on Jeremy
 - Reviews were all positive!
- Board position renewals/appointments
 - Look over the 2024 sheet for typos, address corrections, phone number corrections, etc.
 - Jeremy informed new Park Board member, Nick Landers, that he has been put into the committees on which Erin Lozano had previously been serving, but if he wanted to weigh in on that and possibly switch committees, to let Mary know
 - All other Park Board members are content at this time to remain on their existing committees

4. Property Committee: Mike and Mary Nell

- Rolling Prairie Highway Dept. property discussion
 - As of last meeting, the Board was in favor of working with commissioners to accept that property as potential future park
 - Rich Mrozinski stated that we would need a letter of acceptance; legal documentation that the property has been transferred to the Park Dept.

- Many people in the Rolling Prairie area are excited about the potential of having a new park out that way
- Jeremy said that Mitch Bishop has agreed to do a preliminary drawing

5. Planning Committee: Amanda and Mary Nell

- Dept. of Health trail planning grant application
 - \$20,000 grant with a match of \$20,000 (\$10K from Park Foundation and \$10K from Park Dept. non-reverting account)
 - Jeremy would also like to apply for another \$25,000 from HFL
 - This is for the development of a comprehensive plan of all the trails throughout the whole of La Porte County with an end goal of making them connect with each other
 - Ron stated that it made good sense to come up with such a plan

6. Rules Committee: Amanda and Mike

- No report

OLD BUSINESS

1. Kankakee Property lease renewal decision
 - Our lease with the DNR expires next April, and now would be the time to apply for renewal
 - The board's previous consensus was that it is not advantageous to renew this lease due to access issues and maintenance issues
 - The site is only accessible by boat
 - We get more complaints than inquiries on this property
 - Mike made a motion, seconded by Amanda to let the lease lapse and return this property to DNR. Motion carried 6-0.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Approval to apply for Dept. of Health Grant trail planning grant
 - Mary made a motion to approve
 - Seconded by Amanda
 - Motion carried 6-0
2. Approval to apply for Health Foundation of La Porte trail planning grant
 - Amanda made a motion to approve
 - Seconded by Mike
 - Motion carried 6-0
3. \$10,000 match request for trail planning grant from account 1179-20200-000-0259
 - Mike made a motion to allow the spending of non-reverting monies
 - Seconded by Mary
 - Motion carried 6-0

BOARD & STAFF COMMENTS

- Ron gave a plug for the Night Hikes; said they are very enjoyable
- Jeremy gave a plug for the Fractal Frolic family dance on Feb. 23 & 24

- Rich said that he wished all county meetings ran this smoothly; said that Jeremy does a great job

ADJOURNMENT

- Jim made a motion to adjourn the meeting
- Amanda seconded the motion
- Motion carried 6-0