

LaPorte County Park Board Meeting

June 4, 2024 Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting called to order by Ron

ROLL CALL

- Present: Amanda Nebelung, Mike King, Mary Nell Murphy, Nick Landers, Jim Holifield, Ron Knickrehm, Mary Komenas
- Absent: None absent
- Guests: ALCO TV, Rich Mrozinski, April Messacar, Jill Landers

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- Ron added a request for funding to replace the roof at Red Mill EEC building, which is in need of replacement; added under New Business on the agenda.
- Mary Nell made a motion to approve the agenda as amended; seconded by Mary.
- Motion carried 7-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Mike made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as written; seconded by Nick.
- Motion carried 7-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Rich Mrozinski presented an update on the former Highway Dept. property in Rolling Prairie.
- All positive feedback from Council members & Commissioners.
- Dr. White from New Prairie High School suggested having students from NPHS environmental classes to go to the new property and give ideas trails and usage of the property as extra credit.
- Dr. Cadwell of the Rolling Prairie Conservation Club has also offered up the help of the club to come up with ideas.
- Rich emphasized that there is no hurry on this either.
- He also offered help from other departments, as far as equipment, etc.
- He said that it is on tomorrow's agenda at the Commissioners meeting to sign that property over to the Parks Dept. It WILL happen!
- That location holds much potential in light of all that the future holds for that area of La Porte County and the upcoming industries moving into the area.
- Rich has spoken with Mitch Bishop regarding obtaining grants to improve this property.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

- Account balances are looking normal for this time of the year.
- Rental revenue continues to be good.
- No red flags at this point.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. Administrative Report

- Bluhm DNR project update
 - Jeremy showed a map showing trails to be added
 - 8-ft.-wide trails
 - Stream rerouted back to its natural path
 - DNR will be purchasing an easement
- Seasonal hiring update
 - We are now fully staffed!
- EEC roof
 - Jeremy obtained pricing for both roofs at Red Mill as a future project, however the EEC developed a leak and had to be replaced immediately.
 - We were able to pay for this with non-reverting funds.
- Mower purchase for Bluhm
 - The current mower at Bluhm is a 104" batwing mower--very challenging for the seasonals to operate!
 - The FMEC wants this mower to use at the fairgrounds.
 - We got pricing for a new Scag mower: \$15,039.00
 - Park Foundation donated \$7,500.00; we got \$3,000 from FMEC for the old mower; County Council provided the remaining \$4,539.
- Added item: Grant for the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan
 - Jeremy wants to include the Planning Committee (Amanda and Mary Nell) in the process of selecting a vendor.
 - Requests for qualifications are due by June 30th.
 - Jeremy knows of several interested contractors already.

2. Maintenance & Construction Report

- Ceiling installed in the Bluhm Grove shelter to keep the English sparrows from nesting and making messes in the rental/food area.
- New roof put on the Grove shelter.
- New concrete around the Grove shelter.
- These improvements were paid for by the Park Foundation.

3. Programs Report

- April Messacar (Chief Naturalist) gave the Program Report.
- The solar eclipse programs were a success.
- April has found that partnering with the La Porte County library has been a positive experience, and she plans to continue doing various programs with them going forward.
- Night Hikes in general, and specifically, a Star Wars themed May 4th Night Hike at Bluhm was very well attended.

4. Park Counts

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. Executive Committee: Ron and Jim

- No report

2. Budget Committee: Nick and Mary

- Nick reported that the budget is going to remain the same for 2025, for the most part.

- The only increase is going to be in the Consultant account, for research and development planning of the new Rolling Prairie property.
 - Jeremy added that we need to have a *professional* plan drawn up which includes public input, as well as a realistic plan of “attack” to make improvements in a logical and affordable order so that we don’t have to ask for a huge sum of money all at one time; and also, to make the most of available grant opportunities.
3. Personnel Committee: Nick and Mary
 - Cara FitzGerald has resigned her position as the Recreation and Education Programmer.
 - We are actively interviewing for her replacement.
 - Jeremy says that we have a likely replacement; an announcement is pending.
 4. Property Committee: Mike and Mary Nell
 - Hunt Lake property update
 - This was covered at the Public Comment time at the beginning of the meeting by Rich Mrozinski.
 - Jeremy added that the addition of this property comes at an advantageous time in light of future developments coming to the Rolling Prairie area.
 - This also provides opportunity for potential donors as well.
 5. Planning Committee: Amanda and Mary Nell
 - Future of Health cabin at Red Mill
 - The evaluation of this cabin has brought to light that it is not prudent to try to save this structure.
 - It is difficult to access. It has been unused for many years. There is not good reason to keep this building.
 - Mary Nell asked if the cement pad that the cabin sits on could be saved to use for something else.
 - Repurposing ideas include possible picnic shelter or possible bird watching shelter. Submit ideas to the planning committee!
 6. Rules Committee: Amanda and Mike
 - No report

OLD BUSINESS: No old business

NEW BUSINESS

- Approval of 2025 La Porte County Parks Operating Budget request
 - Jim made a motion to approve the 2025 Operating Budget request; seconded by Mike.
 - Motion carried 7-0.
- Canada Lodge roof request
 - Jeremy has obtained quotes for both standing seam metal and shingle roofing.
 - His preference is the standing seam metal because he also anticipates adding solar panels to the roof, and the standing seam metal allows for the panels to be installed without drilling holes into the roof.

- Longevity on the standing seam metal is also three times longer than shingles.
- Jeremy is asking the Park Board for permission to go to the Commissioners to get permission to go before the Council and request ARP money for this project.
- Mary made a motion to give Jeremy permission; seconded by Mary Nell.
- Motion carried 7-0.

BOARD & STAFF COMMENTS

- Jeremy wishes Cara well on her new job.

ADJOURNMENT

- Jim made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Nick.
- Motion carried 7-0.