

## **LaPorte County Park Board Meeting**

### **August 5, 2025 Minutes**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting called to order by Ron at 5:02 pm.

**ROLL CALL:**

- Present: Michelle Braddy, Jesi Davenport, Jim Holifield, Mike King, Ron Knickrehm, Nick Landers, Mary Nell Murphy
- Absent: None
- Guests: Brandon Torres
- Jeremy Sobecki, Cathy Fuller

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

- Mary Nell made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Mike.
- Agenda approved, 7-0.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- No changes, corrections, or additions suggested.
- Nick made a motion to approve the minutes as written; seconded by Mike.
- Minutes approved, 7-0.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- Guest Brandon Torres introduced himself to the Board. Brandon is an avid disc golf player, member of a disc golf club, plays often at the Creek Ridge course multiple times, and whom Jeremy has been consulting in regards to updating the course.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS:**

- Going forward, Jeremy would like to have Park Board officers initial a copy of the general ledger, which lists all the specific expenditures made by the Park Dept.
- There are quite a few accounts that are spent down entirely.
- We will have to rely on our non-reverting funds after that. This is typical for this time of year.
- Jim made a motion to approve the financial report; seconded by Michelle.
- Financial report approved, 7-0.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

1. Administrative Report
  - Ongoing phone issues
    - Phone lines have been out almost once a week lately!
    - We also had to update our phone system--new telephones for everyone in the office at Red Mill.
    - Jeremy is investigating some possibility other than landline, because we need something more reliable.
  - Rolling Prairie property master plan update
    - Preliminary drawing of ideas, based on the public meeting survey, was discussed.

- More fishing piers, additional parking near the shelters, suggested.
    - It was discussed that boats be limited to rowboats and kayaks, no motors.
    - ADA accessibility needs to be available to the boat launch area.
  - Possible Nature Center addition update
    - The County has approved \$10,000 (Consultant account) for design work in the 2026 budget.
    - We will look to get that project going right away at the start of the new year.
  - Reindeer event at Luhr
    - This will be on Dec. 5, 2025
    - Jeremy has procured donations from Antero Group, Rieth-Riley, and Friends of the Library to pay for the rental of the reindeer.
  - Park Foundation projects
    - Luhr—we have a person contracted to do invasive removal.
    - Luhr—our staff is replacing rotted decking by the pond.
    - Luhr—our staff is building sections of boardwalk to connect to a new section of trail on the south 15 acres.
    - Luhr—prescribed burn
    - Creek Ridge—new utility/maintenance cart approved
    - Creek Ridge—new siding and roof for Novak shelter
    - Bluhm—UnderFence mow strips for the dog park
    - Bluhm—new trail signage, and possible trail reroutes
    - Bluhm—invasives removal planned
  - Volunteers for Pioneer Days needed
    - Pioneer Days dates are Sept. 27 & 28. We are in need of volunteers for all the stations!
2. Maintenance & Construction Report
  3. Programs Report
  4. Park Counts
    - Mary Nell asked about the counter at Sebert Woods. (The count was way high last month.)
    - Jeremy said that the maintenance guys cleared all tall weeds away from the counter. He has also amended the formula which we use to better reflect the numbers at Sebert.

#### **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:**

1. Executive Committee: Ron and Jim
  - No report
2. Budget Committee: Nick and Jesi
  - No report
3. Personnel Committee: Nick and Jesi
  - No report
4. Property Committee: Mike and Mary Nell
  - Future of caretaker's house
    - The house is in very bad shape: mold in basement, leaky roof, drafty windows, outdated kitchen and bath. In order for the house to be habitable, it would need a lot of work—very expensive!
    - The County is not set up to be a landlord, so there is no point in putting money into this house.
    - Options are: just let the building sit until it collapses, or tear it down.

- Selling the house is not optimal, and would not bring in much money.
  - This location would serve us better with a maintenance/storage building.
  - Jeremy suggested asking the Highway Dept. if they would help us raze the building to reduce the demolition cost.
  - Mary Nell made a motion to have Jeremy look into the cost and process of having the house demolished; seconded by Mike.
  - Motion passed, 7-0.
5. Planning Committee: Michelle and Mary Nell
    - No report
  6. Rules Committee: Michelle and Mike
    - No report

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Discussion of Committee duties from last meeting
  - This does not necessitate a vote, but if anyone has any suggestions for changes, please send them to Jeremy. We can discuss them via emails.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Review draft of bicycle and pedestrian trails master plan
  - Mission statement: "La Porte County envisions a safe, sustainable bicycle and pedestrian network that fosters economic activity and recreational opportunities that connects to parks, towns, cities, and key destinations. This network will feature multi-use trails, creative wayfinding, and pedestrian-friendly access while prioritizing safety, health, and non-motorized transportation."
  - Jeremy emphasized that this is a very realistic plan. They are not proposing hundreds of miles of separated bike trails, which is cost-prohibitive. This plan seeks to utilize existing trails and roadways, but with less expensive improvements to ensure safety for bicyclists.
  - Jeremy has some suggestions and corrections, and would like to revisit this again. He is hoping to have Antero Group give a PowerPoint presentation at the next meeting.
2. Creek Ridge County Park Disc Golf course redesign
  - Brandon Torres explained how he would advise upgrading to 18 holes and bring the layout up to current standards; improve the technicality of the course.
  - His recommendations would require little to no destruction to trees and wooded areas.
  - He hopes to have disc golf events at Creek Ridge, such as tournaments, to bring more people in to enjoy the course and the park.
  - Mary Nell asked about frequency of activity and number of people anticipated. Brandon estimated that for tournaments, they could see 50-90 people. We could anticipate disc golf clubs meeting there weekly.
  - Brandon assured that he would keep the Park's scheduled programs in mind and not plan conflicting events.
  - Jim made a motion to have Jeremy investigate advancing and improving the existing 9-hole disc golf course into 18 holes; seconded by Mary Nell.
  - Motion passed 7-0.
3. Decision on NIPSCO Easement at Luhr County Park
  - Guy Martino, County attorney, has looked over the easement proposal from NIPSCO and has not raised any concerns with it.

- The footprint will be essentially the same as what is there now.
- Jeremy checked with the DNR and they confirmed that there were no issues with granting this easement to NIPSCO.
- NIPSCO has offered to pay the Parks \$500.00 to purchase this easement granting them access to the property.
- Mike made a motion to grant NIPSCO this easement; seconded by Jesi.
- Motion passed, 7-0.

**BOARD & STAFF COMMENTS:**

- Mary Nell will not be able to attend the next meeting.
- Mike King will not be able to attend the next meeting either.
- Ron pointed out that everyone else would have to come to the next meeting in order to have a quorum; so, if you are unable to make it, let Jeremy or Cathy know ASAP.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

- Mike made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Michelle.
- Meeting adjourned.