

Regular Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Commission

Approved Minutes

Date: March 4, 2009

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Place: Fillmore Complex, Conference Room E

Present: Paul Geerlings, Bobbi Jones Sabine, Ray Statema, Roger Jonas, David Van Ginhoven and Jim Miedema.

Absent: Ted Bosgraaf, Philip Kuyers, Joyce Kortman and David Vander Kooi

Staff: John Scholtz, Director; Curt TerHaar, Coordinator of Park Planning and Development; Sherry Costello, Administrative Clerk; Dave Mazurek, Park Operations Superintendent and Chip Francke; Parks Naturalist & Information Specialist.

Guests: Joyce Smith, Fred Vaas, Matt Hehl, Ben Miedema, Robert Miedema and Mark Oppenhuizen.

Subject: Approval of Minutes

PR 09-16 Motion: To approve the minutes of the Commission's February 4, 2009 regular meeting.
Moved by: Geerlings Supported by: Van Ginhoven Unanimous

Subject: Approval of Minutes – Special Meeting

PR 09-17 Motion: To approve the minutes of the Commission's February 18, 2009 special meeting.
Moved by: Statema Supported by: Van Ginhoven Unanimous

Subject: Nature Education Center Bids

PR 09-18 Motion: To receive bids for the Nature Education Center project at Hemlock Crossing and authorize the Parks Director to work with the project team to interview the low bidders and make a recommendation to the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners with bid amount not to exceed the lowest bid.
Moved by: Jonas Supported by: Geerlings Unanimous

Subject: Grand River Ravines Acquisition Project

PR 09-19 Motion: To approve the resolution authorizing submittal of the grant application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for funding assistance for the Grand River Ravines Acquisition Project and forward to the Board of Commissioners.
 Moved by: Statema Supported by: Miedema Unanimous

Subject: Hager Park Stream Fencing Project

PR 09-20 Motion: To receive bids for the Hager Park Stream Fencing Project and recommend Plaggemars Construction at a cost of \$13,990.00
 Moved by: Geerlings Supported by: Van Ginhoven Unanimous

Subject: Go Into Closed Session

PR 09-21 Motion: To go into Closed Session to discuss property matters.
 Moved by: Statema Supported by: Miedema
 Yeas: Geerlings, Statema, Sabine, Van Ginhoven, Jonas and Miedema.
 Nays: None Motion passed 6 to 0.

Subject: To Rise From Closed Session

PR 09-22 Motion: To rise from Closed Session.
 Moved by: Geerlings Supported by: Miedema Unanimous

Other Items Discussed:

Vice President Sabine called the meeting to order by roll call and asked for any additions or deletions to the agenda. Statema requested to add a brief Friends report.

Commission members received the communication dated February 11, 2009 from the Trust for Public Land and the National Association of Counties informing us that Ottawa County Parks was a finalist but not selected for an award in their County Leadership in Conservation Awards program. Scholtz noted that staff was urged to apply for the conservation award by County Administrator Vanderberg and Commissioner Kortman. The application consisted of a 2500 word essay. Sabine felt the accomplishment was worthy of a press release.

Commission members reviewed the report of the Parks and Recreation Commission expenditures through January 31, 2008.

Vice President Sabine moved on to the Director's report and Scholtz updated the Commission on the hiring of the new parks secretary, announcing Tabitha Rowley as the best applicant for the position. She will start employment on March 16th.

Scholtz commented on a meeting he attended at Grand Haven City Hall to discuss deer management in the greater Grand Haven area. Jonas expressed his approval of deer culling on County park property, along with Sabine, who questioned the impact it might have on the deer enclosure study that is currently being undertaken by Grand Valley State University. Francke did not feel that deer culling would impact the study, as it would take five years to complete. Statema added that the increased number of deer will become more and more of a concern.

Scholtz then discussed the Grand River Greenway cruise event sponsored by the Friends of Ottawa County Parks. He explained that last year local officials and Board members were invited and Parks offered to subsidize their fee. He questioned Commission members if they would like to continue this in the coming year. Sabine felt that from a public relations perspective, it was a low cost event to promote the greenway with other units of government. Van Ginhoven and other Commission members agreed.

Scholtz reminded staff of a request received previously from Hoek's Dewatering on behalf of a landowner near Riley Trails in regards to pumping water onto the site. He went on to explain that the request was previously withdrawn and now the request is being made a second time with the Road Commission willing to grant permission to bore under Riley Street. Park staff met with the dewatering company at the site and reviewed the request to run a pipe above ground to disperse water into the woods. Scholtz expressed that staff is not very supportive of the request. Jonas added that there would be a concern that freezing may be an issue with the pipe on top of the ground. He added that he is aware of several homes that are having the same problem and is concerned about setting a precedent for this type of activity. Jonas suggested contacting the Township for more information as there were several engineering firms retained to give an analysis of the problem. Van Ginhoven agreed with importance of the issue and the necessity to assess the situation before making a decision. Scholtz will contact Township to gather more information.

Sabine then moved ahead to New Business and received the bids for building construction and site work for the Nature Education Center Project. TerHaar distributed the bid tabulation sheet and budget considerations for the project. Scholtz noted that there were 17 bidders for the project, with CL Construction being the apparent low bidder. He added that the bids did not come in as low as staff had hoped and gave an update on the current funding.

Francke noted that Sabine sat on the fundraising committee for the Nature Education Center and spent a year on the project. A fund-raising consultant was hired to assess the project and all avenues were explored. He continued by stating that a lot of time and money has already been invested into this project. Scholtz thought the next step for the project, if the Commission wanted to move ahead, would be to meet with the four lowest bidders of the project and conduct full interviews, with a recommendation going to the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners.

Oppenhuizen spoke and mentioned several points regarding the center:

- Will be a unique facility.
- Will be a great complement for the Parks system.
- Has never seen a project that was bid so competitively.
- Will not be able to build this type of building for this low of a cost in the future.
- Contractors on the list are recognized as high quality builders.
- Good for the local economy – the two lowest bids are from Ottawa County.
- Can still look at ways to save with out compromising quality.
- The building will make quite a statement with its LEED certification and energy efficiency.

Francke reminded Commission members that the Nature Education Center will also serve as a visitor's center for the entire park system. Jonas agreed with Oppenhuizen and Francke and stated that timing is everything. If the project is put on hold, the cost to build at a later date will just increase. He continued by expressing his support for the "green" certification and thought that it could be used as an educational tool for students. He suggested that fundraising could be ongoing. He also stated that the members of the Commission made a commitment to build the center and should follow through with the plan. Sabine stated that her role is to be a representative of the public, and shifting dollars to this project will serve the entire County. Statema commented that it was such a shame to be so close but yet so far away and the hopes of having a big contributor step up did not come to realization. He suggested the possibility of not finishing part of the building or changing the design. Oppenhuizen responded that it would be very difficult at this point to cut anything out and the building was not well suited to do that. He added that if you cut more than ten percent out of the project, it would seriously affect the building. Geerlings felt delaying the project would be a mistake. He stated that the millage dollars were designated for parks and this project will help the local economy. Van Ginhoven agreed and stated it would not do any good to hold the money in the bank during this poor economy. He also gave his support of the geothermal heating and cooling system proposed for the building, noting that Zeeland Schools has had success with these systems. Miedema agreed as well. The project was approved by motion.

Sabine moved on to the Grand River Ravines Acquisition Project public hearing. Scholtz summarized the Grand River Ravines project as a proposed application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and described how the property will be an important link in the greenway trail system. TerHaar described the preliminary plans for the project. Scholtz added that this ravine system was identified by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory as one of Ottawa County's most significant natural areas. He went on to explain that they would be proposing a \$720,000 grant with \$720,000 in matching funds. Two members of the public were present to learn about the project and both decline to comment. The acquisition project was approved by motion.

Sabine moved on to public comment and Ottawa County Commissioner Matt Hehl requested the possibility of having a community garden at Eastmanville Farm. He stated he had been approached by the public requesting this and was looking for possible options to locate a large garden. Scholtz thought it could be a possibility and Francke added that the idea had come up previously through farm park discussions. Hehl explained that it was just in the conceptual stages and was not sure what the need was yet. Hehl also commented the he had participated in the Grand River Greenway cruise last

year and felt that it was an excellent idea to again invite local government representatives. Hehl concluded with a request for clarification as to what determines whether the Parks Commission allows bow or gun hunting on a parks property. Scholtz explained that it depends on whether it is designated as park or opens space and the specific site and the use it will be designed for. Mazurek also added that some sites have houses close to the borders of the property which would be considered in the decision.

Sabine moved on to the Parks Operations Report and asked if Mazurek had anything to add. Mazurek reported that 12 Park Attendants were going to be returning this season. Sabine mentioned that during a recent visit to the area near the Pratt property, she noted 40 to 50 cars along side the road. Scholtz stated that staff is really committed to getting access to the site for next year and will come with a proposal. Sabine also expressed her concern regarding alcohol use at the site and Scholtz acknowledged that it would have to be addressed.

Sabine continued with the Parks Naturalist's Report and Francke gave an update on red pine management.

Sabine submitted the Public Relations Committee Report as written and Statema noted that he would not be able to attend a 1 p.m. meeting. Sabine moved the meeting to 2 p.m. on April 29th.

Statema then updated Commission members on the meeting of the Friends of Ottawa County Parks and reported that the Friends attended a wellness expo and set up displays and distributed Parks newsletters. He also announced a photo contest for children and is looking for contributions for prizes. He announced the new annual Re-Use Re-sale to be May 15 & 16, 2009.

Sabine called for Old Business and TerHaar commented that a majority of time this past month was spent on the Nature Education Center.

Commission members received the bids for the Hager Park Stream Fencing Project and TerHaar explained there would be over 1300 feet of fencing installed along the Hager Creek restoration area and recommended Plaggemars for the project. The contract was approved by motion.

Sabine asked for Public Comment and Ms. Joyce Smith requested that the Park 12 be added to the deer management list.

Sabine asked for any comments from Commission members and Jonas suggested a ground breaking ceremony at the Nature Education Center.

The Parks Commission went into Closed Session to discuss property matters.

Meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.