

MINUTES

Eau Claire County

• Committee on Parks & Forest •

Monday, June 14, 2021

5:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Members: Kevin Stelljes, Joe Knight, Missy Christopherson, Tami Schraufnagel

Others Present: Josh Pedersen – Director, Jody Gindt – Supervisor, Winnie Parker – Administrative Specialist III (Committee Clerk), Erika Gullerud – Finance Analyst, Susan Preston – Chippewa Valley Lighting Bolts Representative, Debbie Kitchen – Eau Claire County Fair Representative

Chairman Kevin Stelljes called the meeting to order at 5 p.m. and confirmed public posting of the meeting.

The committee reviewed the minutes from the May 10, 2021, meeting. Supervisor Knight moved to approve the minutes as presented. It passed unanimously.

No members of the public were present.

Susan Preston of the Chippewa Valley Lighting Bolts (CVLB) requested to host their annual meet at Tower Ridge on October 16, 2021. After some discussion, it was decided to give Josh Pedersen, Director, the authority to set up this meet in keeping with the Parks and Forest guidelines.

Debbie Kitchen of the Eau Claire County Fair requested to have the Lowes Creek entrance gate closed during the fair and to add signs one week prior to the event to let the public know of the event. After a short discussion, there was no opposition, and no action is needed.

The Committee reviewed the annual free park entrance and free camping weekend. The free camping weekend is not reaching the intended audience, significant revenue is lost, and extra time and effort are required for logistics and the reservation website. Chairman Kevin Stelljes made a motion to continue to provide a free park entry weekend that coincides with the state's free weekend but discontinue the free camping weekend. All in favor, none opposed.

The topic of giving a senior discount for Annual Vehicle Park Passes was discussed. After some exchange of ideas, a motion was made by Chairman Kevin Stelljes to fund not only seniors but anyone who has a hardship which would prevent individuals from taking advantage of our parks and all their amenities. Supervisor Tami Schraufnagel volunteered to speak with Betsy Henck from Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) to discuss how to move forward with a low maintenance program that removes the barriers and stigma of providing this amenity to individuals in this population.

The conversation regarding the County Forest Stewardship Projects continued from the Committee's last meeting. Doug Brown, DNR County Forest Specialist, gave Josh Pedersen three (3) different appraisal agencies to contact. Despite the cost, the Committee would like to move forward with this step to explore the possibility of acquiring more property for the benefit of the County. Kevin Stelljes will call Landmark Conservancy, a non-profit conservation organization to further discuss fund raising and grant writing to pay for the cost of an appraisal. Also, the state would pay half of the cost of the appraisal if the property appraised is purchased by the County. Supervisor Kevin Stelljes moved to spend up to \$7,000 for an appraisal and find a way to minimize the cost and/or share the cost with the property owner. All in favor, none opposed.

Director's notes: In 2022, staffing levels will reset back to what we had prior to 2020 and the reductions due to Covid. This will include the staff we already have plus three (3) additional staff people. Summer staff has been fully hired at this time for the 2021 season. The 15-year Plan has been accepted by the DNR. Hard copies are being produced.

Future items for discussion: Review of the fee schedule and structure.

The next meeting date was set for July 12, 2021, at 5:00 p.m., virtually.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Winnie Parker
Committee Clerk
Administrative Specialist III – Parks & Forest