

MINUTES

Eau Claire County

• Committee on Parks & Forest •

Monday, April 18, 2022

3:00 pm

Room AG 203

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

Others Present: Josh Pedersen – Director, Jody Gindt – Supervisor, Winnie Parker – Administrative Specialist III (Committee Clerk), Erika Gullerud – Finance Analyst, Nick Smiar – Ex Officio Member, Kyle Johnson – DNR County Forest Liaison, Jacob Tumm – EC County Forester, Michelle Skinner – Altoona District, Thomas Feck – Advisory Committee Member

Chairman Stelljes called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm and confirmed public posting of the meeting.

Roll call was taken by the committee clerk and is noted above.

The committee reviewed the minutes from the March 14, 2022, meeting. Joe Knight moved to approve the minutes as amended. The minutes passed unanimously.

Michele Skinner of the Altoona District was present and addressed the Committee about the 33 days of beach closures in 2021. The district has gathered a group of volunteers to record geese and seagull activity on and near the lake and Scheels has donated a trail Cam to do the same. They are trying to get a preliminary determination as to whether these birds are contaminating the waters and causing the closures at Altoona Lake Park. She is trying to secure funding to send water samples to the state hygiene lab, which will soon have the capability and science to use DNA signatures to determine what specific kind of E.coli is causing the beach closures.

Kyle Johnson and Jacob Tumm highlighted one tract out of ten (10) for the 2022 Spring Timber Sales, on which, for the first time in Eau Claire County, we have found the Emerald Ash Borer in the county forests. While there are not a lot of ash trees in the county forests, it is good to go ahead and harvest these trees before they die off. Gary Gibson moved to approve the 2022 Spring Timber Sale as presented. All in favor, none opposed.

Advisory Committee Applicant, Thomas Feck, was introduced by Joe Knight to the Committee. After serving 33 years with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, being a part of the Nature Conservancy and Sierra Club for ten (10) years, and as a young adult a part of the Conservation Corps, Tom has a desire to serve on the Advisory Committee now that he has the time, energy, knowledge, and concern for the parks in general. Tom feels he can best engage and contribute his knowledge in Eau Claire County on the Advisory Committee. Joe Knight moved to approve Thomas Feck to the Advisory Committee. All in favor, none opposed.

Two years ago, just before Covid-19 pandemic started, the Committee approved a \$10 discount for senior citizens. Even though this was approved back in 2020, there was no action taken to implement the decision. The Committee, therefore, needs to re-approve the senior discount and further define the parameters of said discount. After some discussion, it was determined to give a \$10 discount to those

65 years and older starting January 2023. Kevin Stelljes moved to authorize Josh Pedersen to draft an ordinance to allow \$10 discounts to those 65 and older starting January 2023. All in favor, none opposed.

Discussions with the owners of the Sand Mine and Anderson properties have discontinued. The discussion, however, for the Heartwood Forest Land is still ongoing and an official appraisal has been conducted. The land appraised at \$3100 per acre, which is lower than the \$4000 the owners are seeking. The owners have indicated that they will not entertain any negotiations without a written offer. This once-in-a-generation opportunity would be a significant acquisition for Eau Claire County, connecting property already owned by the county. The Committee deliberated on what would probably be a multi-year endeavor involving a coalition of individuals and groups on the local, county, and state level, but believe it would be well worth the effort. Kevin Stelljes moved to authorize a draft offer with contingencies be drawn to present to the owners of the Hartwood Forest Land as the next step in the process. All in favor, none opposed.

Further dialogue continued about off-road use in county forests. The fifteen (15) year plan describes where individuals can and cannot go on public lands, but the Committee discussed the need to further define the policy of off-road use, to have available a map of roads and trails for use, and to have said trails clearly marked with seasonal restrictions posted. The goal would be to have such policies and maps in place in the next two years as the county forest road and trail system is quite extensive. Joe Knight moved to have the Advisory Committee draft a use map and define a policy document pertaining to off-road use within the next six (6) months. All in favor, none opposed.

The Committee reviewed the National Rifle Club agreement. Although the club is following through with some of the contingencies of the agreement – like creating a sound mitigation barrier near County Road QQ – they have fallen short of fulfilling other contingencies due to funding. The shooting hours will be revisited in February 2023. No action was taken at this time.

The Director, Josh Pedersen, would like to take this opportunity to thank Kevin Stelljes (10 years) and Gary Gibson (18 years) for their long-standing service to the County and this Committee. Their consistency, advice, and support has been invaluable! We congratulate Kevin Stelljes and Gary Gibson and present them with these plaques commemorating their service. They have left behind good people to carry on their vision and passion, and we invite them to continue to participate as volunteers and/or on the Advisory Committee. We thank them for their many years of service. They are each very much appreciated.

The next meeting date was set for May 9, 2022, at 5:00 pm in room AG 203.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by,



Winnie Parker

Committee Clerk

Administrative Specialist III – Parks & Forest